

Psychiatrists tell us that “Love is one of the most profound emotions known to human beings. There are many kinds of love, but most people seek its expression in a romantic relationship with a compatible partner. For many, romantic relationships comprise the most meaningful aspect of life, providing a source of deep fulfillment.”

And a quote from an unknown source says: "Love happens only once, and the second time is always a compromise made to forget the first."

Read Rev. 2: 1-7

Rev. 2:4 records, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

The message is not that the church has completely lost its love for God and the Word, but rather, that the church has allowed its love for God to diminish considerably. Some commentators say that this admonishment is to the cold Christian that has lost his or her enthusiasm in service to God. He still worships, however, his glow for the word is dimmer than at the first. All that’s left is cold formalism. The Christian’s first love will be our subject this morning.

### The Christian’s First Love

Mar. 12:30 “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.”

Read Mark 12: 28-34. From this context, we learn of the Great Commandment. This commandment is the heart of the Christian’s covenant with God. This love is manifested first, in love for the covenant, and second, in loving God’s children. Not through worship! However, both are intricately connected. 1John 4:20 records, “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?”

A genuine love for the seed of Christ is essential because it is this affection that prevents those that handle the Word from introducing heresy into the assembly. Lies and false hopes extended to the brethren only translates into placing stumbling blocks and snares at their feet! What profit is there in worship when the doctrine one preaches is corrupt with bad counsel and false predictions? Therefore, love for the Truth (speaking truth), representing the Son who is the express image of the Father, is the Christian’s first and foremost adherence and love, (Zeph. 3: 13; Eph. 4. 25; 1 Pet. 2: 22).

### Charity

1 Corinthians 13 expresses and defines this love. After a careful reading and much discerning, I was led to the conclusion that the virtue of Charity describes a quality belonging exclusively to the Lord. I believe that it is God’s charity which is summarized here. I say this because the context clearly establishes that, although we as individuals could possess and exercise every single noble virtue worthy of man’s recognition, we could not come close in comparison to the Lord’s “goodness” or “charity” which he has so generously bestowed upon his people from the beginning. And to inaugurate the ushering in of the Dispensation of Grace, as an act of love, he freely gave the world his Son for the atonement of sins. Grant it, although there

have been some that have performed such literal works as the chapter describes to the benefit of mankind, that still does not qualify them for any recognition or reward in the eyes of God!

I believe that the charity in question here is the Lord's continual outpouring of the *Holy Spirit* and *Providence* (divine intervention) upon his covenant people. That is the only charity that has never failed! Charity on the part of men, many times is hypocritical! Highly educated men have failed to explain and to bring to complete fulfillment the mysteries and prophecies of the Bible; especially those related to the Second Coming of Christ! In other words, what does it profit a man to perform so many altruistic and selfless works to help others, yet withhold from them the genuine gospel truth? Nothing!

I call to remembrance the poor widows gift that surpassed all others, recorded in Mark 12:41-44 "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

She didn't give anything significant that could help anyone materialistically! What will a quarter of a penny buy today? Absolutely nothing! Jesus' lesson is about giving the "perfect gift!" He said the same thing to the rich merchant, "If thou wilt be perfect... go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor and come and follow me", (Matt. 19: 21).

What the Spirit does in 1 Corinthians 13 is acknowledge the many excellent achievements and works of man throughout time, and especially in the Church. However, none have ever expressed the type of charity that would bring together in one, all the wonderful things the Lord has done for his people throughout time, reflected in all the biblical prefiguration of divine love. There are men that have contributed much more than the *proverbial poor widow* in favor of the ascension and advancement of the Word of God. But, however much they have done, if they have left a single small link (2 mites) missing in the golden chain of love, and along comes this insignificant individual of low degree and throws in the missing *two mites* to complete that chain of perfect charity (completing the revelation of the doctrine); who is man to accuse the Lord of not being equal?

- Matt. 5:18 "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."
- Psa. 139:16-18 "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being *unperfect*; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."
- Jude 1:3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

It's obvious that to fulfill the entire law, not a single jot or tittle can remain unfulfilled! That is, that even the minutest saying in the law, must come to pass, and there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can prevent that from happening.

In David's vision of the formation of the Son, he first acknowledges a condition of "imperfection." However imperfect this state was in the beginning, not a single detail regarding his development is missing from the proverbial "book" representing the "mind of God." The Lord's book refers to the Lord's schematic or spiritual blueprint for the formation of the Son. The

middle of the text speaks of the developmental process of the same Son; this is expressed in verse 16. The ESV translation says, “You could see my body grow each passing day. You listed all my parts, and not one of them was missing.” Paul spoke of this process cursorily in Gal. 4:19, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you...”

At the closing of the text, there is an overwhelming feeling on the part of the believer resulting from him recognizing that the handiwork of his formation has finally reached the end result of development. This acknowledgement is found in the expression, “How great is the sum of them!” Spiritually speaking, the ultimate result of this vision is to depict the process of "adoption" by means of the continual outpouring of his Spirit that serves to reveal to the church the complete understanding of the doctrine. The interesting thing about this aspect is the assertion that there is not a single iota missing of those things pertaining to the doctrine. The embracing of the complete revelation of the truth has brought the Lord's creation into a state of intimate fellowship with Him, expressed in the saying, “I am still with thee.”

Jude's writings are for a time when the gospel message of deliverance and salvation has been delivered in its entirety. It is at this critical juncture, that the prophetic expression “How great is the sum of them” has come to a fulfillment. This fact is evinced in that only the sum of the Lord's complete counsel could reveal the stealthy entrance of false teachers, and also, detect their heresies that have remained hidden within the church's doctrine from times of old. Jude 4, “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed--men spoken of in ancient writings as pre-destined to this condemnation--ungodly men, who pervert the grace of our God into an excuse for immorality, and disown Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord.” (Weymouth)

#### Jerusalem's Lovers

The antichristian spirit bears the façade of a loyal suitor (husband) of the church. The world is full of preachers that have the ability to woo the masses into believing they can obtain salvation by means of their enticing preaching. They seduce people through much wantonness, according to 2 Pet. 2:18 “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.”

What the Spirit means is that they flatter the flock, as lustful men do with women in order to seduce them; false promises and desirable rewards serve as the basis of their deception. Preachers are in the business of saving souls, however, when the preaching is defiled, the hope of salvation by trusting in lies is converted into a disappointing one night stand with nothing to show for it but defilement, disappointment and rejection.

#### Hosea and Gomer

Reading— Hosea 2: 1-13.

- Hos 1:1-2, “The word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.”
- Hos. 2:5, “For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.”
- Hos. 2:7-8, “And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, *I will go and return to my first husband*; for

then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.”

The “first husband” in this context, is the Lord himself! This is the voice of the Lord’s handmaid representing the church’s collective voice. That the church will eventually recognize its unfaithfulness to Christ’s doctrine is certain. This will be evident through the following circumstances:

1. The church will recognize the loss of biblical support for its doctrine to deliver it from accusation
2. It will acknowledge its lewd behavior as it pertains to the defilement of each gender’s proper role
3. The beauty of its traditional practices will no longer be lauded by her members or by those standing without
4. Shame will cover its leaders as they flee from the fray instead of defending their practices

### The Return of the Honeymoon

Reading— Hosea 2: 14-23.

Hos 2:14-17, “Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.”

There is a scriptural parallel that illustrates the Lord’s mercy over Israel. Although Hosea does not go near the expression “rapture” depicting a spiritual transport of the church into the wilderness to woo her back into the covenant, Revelation 12 does.

Rev. 12:13-17 “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

So, what is the purpose of this transport? To court the Church! (ERV) translation of Hos. 2: 14 says, “So I, the Lord, will speak romantic words to her. I will lead her into the desert and speak tender words.” However, this courtly encounter is spiritual in nature, meaning that the Lord will reinstate and restore all the covenant promises to the church after its cleansing from the former master’s rule, and her promise to steadfastly remain chaste and faithful to the doctrine of Christ. The writer also adds, that *when* this sacred betrothal and union becomes official, the church’s disposition will change dramatically in that she will accept nothing but the unadulterated doctrine of Christ in her midst! This is the identical disposition of the House of the Elect Lady (2<sup>nd</sup> John)!

Another thought-provoking point in the Revelation text is the presence of the antichrist, an eschatological element that functions as an indicator of the time in which this spiritual betrothal takes place. It is a common consensus among religious scholars that this union becomes

officially legitimized at the *Second Coming of Christ*; another eschatological element found in the Jude text (v.14).

In Hosea 2: 18, 21-22, the Spirit appeals to the Lord's entire creation as a witness to this sacred union!

#### Conclusion\_

The restoration of the believer's first love affords everyone, direct access to living waters representative of wisdom in the gospel truth, found within the house of the elect, (2<sup>nd</sup> John). The work of the elect has restored the commandment that we received from the beginning, and that is, to love one another.

Therefore, if this entity is identified as practicing perfect love for the brethren by preaching the glad tidings of restoration and salvation, wouldn't it be safe to say that it represents the very paragon and embodiment of charity? And wouldn't it be safe to conclude, that this is also the place where mercy and forgiveness of sins can be obtained? If indeed, you thirst for salvation, hear the Lord's tender calling out of Rev. 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

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*Israel Y. Patiño*