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THE GREATEST ~~THING~~ IN THE WORLD
LOVE

Greater love has no man than that a man lay down his life for his friends (Jno. 15:13)

If we can define God, then we can define L for "God is love". Jeremy Taylor said, "The greatest thing that God can give us is love for Himself is love; and the greatest thing that we can give to God is love for it will also give our selves and carry with it all that is ours."

We are prone to think of love as being of two kinds: love for good and love for evil. This I think is erroneous. Love in its true sense is from only one source and that source is God, no evil comes from God, therefore any thing coming from Him would not desire evil. Love is a term too sacred to use in the sense--love for evil.

The word should not be love but DESIRE for evil.

Now by looking at the two words we can see that there is a vast difference in meaning. DESIRE for evil hardens a person. Shakespeare's greatest villian, Iago in making this desire the angel of his dreams fell victim to its parching effect until one day he became crust-ed with a shell more hard than could be pier-ced by the pleadings of right and justice. He was moved with feverish enjoyment when Cassio was attacked and Roderigo was murdered. His rehearsal of tragedies was amongst even his nearest friends and was practiced with a steady nerve and unabated resolution. Fellow feeling was so weak in him that almost an absolute egoism grew up in him, which carried with it those hard vices__ingratitude and cruelty.

Desire hardens in to a Lady Macbeth whose characteristics were as the darkness of night lit with the flame of tempest and hues of blood. Haunted by wild and direful shapes, murdering ministers, spirits of remorse and maddening visions.

Love, on the other hand, softens people into dispositions of kindness and gentleness. The story of Jonathan and David shows how this principle when exercised can grow hearts together until the persons become as one. Beautiful is the example of Ruth, as you all remember, who loved so that she cleaved to her mother-in-law. Then to take another character in Shakespeare let us look at Cordelia. Lear loved his two other daughters although they had mistreated him, but Cordelia, even knowing all of this and conscious that he loved her not in truth was the one he found by his side when by all others he lay helpless and forsaken. She spoke barely a hundred lines but yet her love and devotion almost ~~made~~ her in the tragedy. She could have shunned adversity but she loved her father too much:

For thee oppressed king, am I cast down,
Myself could else out-frown false fortunes frown.

Love establishes confidence. When you see a person with a lack of confidence in another you may put it down that true love harbors not in that life. Jealousy is not a sign of love but on the contrary is the sign of no love. It shows distrust and ~~lack~~ of faith.

Love worketh no evil, vaunteth not itself is not easily provoked, is puffed up in no way, suffers long, is kind, and seeketh not her own. Oh wonderful love!

Love is creative. It was this fact in the God head that made him love us and the other

worlds into existence. He did this because He loved life and wanted new personalities to exist. It was not that the human race would give no trouble and pain but because he loved.

A woman, your mother did not become such because she desired the pain that attends motherhood or because she cherished the cares that the mother has with the rearing of children but because she LOVES the little heavenly citizen who one day will throw angel smiles and kisses at in token of her painful labor. Christian Ethics teaches us that love is not really known till parents look their off spring in the eyes.

Love is redemptive willing to make any sacrifice to bring back life. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jno. 3:16).

It holds on when all else fails. I saw a girl and a boy come into the train some time ago. He wore the kaikai and they presently came to the station where he got off to board another train but she was going on to take a little trip to help in passing off her troubled thoughts. The train that carried her pulled out from the station and seemed to pull heavily so strong were the bonds binding their hearts. She waved farewell and buried her face in her hands and wept. We said here is love expressing itself.

Love casteth out fear. "If your child or wife were in a burning building you would go to them never stopping to fear death. I speak your sentiment when I say that if my child or wife were in that condition I would go to them if the only thing I could do before dying were to lay my blistered hands on their charred bodies.

The highest expression of love is giving your life for another. A man once said, " I was on a ship one

night and it became disabled. My mate was named Jim. Jim was a Christian boy I was not. We talked our danger to one another and to the crowd on the ship. Finally we got a message to a lone life boat which came and took part of the people to shore. The boat could make only one more trip before the ship went down but that one trip more could not take all the passengers. We cast lots to see who would go and who would stay on the sinking ship. Amongst others it fell my lot to stay on the ship and fell Jim's to go on the life boat. It returned and with a sad face I stood near to see the people rush to life and safety. In a second I felt a hand in my back and it lounged me into the throng that was going to the life boat and there was such a rush that I was pushed on. I did look back and saw that it was Jim that shoved me and when I saw him I said, ' But Jim you got the lucky number come on and let me back' but good Jim said as he went DOWN with the ship, 'Meet me in heaven man.' I then and there gave my life to the Christ that could make a hero like Jim."

" Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Friends, this is what Jesus did for us, now let us who have not, give our selves to Him and we who have been converted give our selves in renewed consecration to Him.

Ripley Dec. 22.

