

COLOSSIANS BIBLE STUDY

Colossians 3:12-17 (b)

Lesson #17

Introduction

Last week we got through verse 13 of our study of Colossians chapter three. So we'll pick up now at verse 14 and continue through verse 17. But first let's read the whole section of verses to establish their proper context.

The Christian Heart and Life

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you [forgive others]. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Col 3:12-17 (NASB)

Now, beginning with verse 14 let's continue our study:

Verse 14:

14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

We've come to a point now, actually it started at verse 12, where we moved from the more theological teaching into the practical life experiences and heart attitudes. Now in honesty I want to confess to you that I'm more comfortable when I'm dealing with the theology than I am when I'm dealing with the practicality. You see theology can be learned and understood and then maintained with reasonable integrity. But the practical issues, the day-to-day life, the deep abiding heart attitudes, these are really much more difficult, because just when you think you've got a handle on them they seem to slip away.

My friend Tom and myself have often discussed the sad fact that one's growth in practice and attitude do not seem to be directly proportional to one's depth of knowledge and understanding. King Solomon would be an excellent case in point. According to the Bible, he was the wisest man to ever live, but if we examine his lifestyle he himself would certainly say it was wanting. And likewise would be the confession, I suspect, of every Bible teacher and every serious student. It was Solomon himself who wrote that "with much knowledge comes much pain." Certainly by that statement he meant that the greater our knowledge of God and his Holiness, the greater is our discomfort over of our own condition.

And this is the situation we have when we start moving into verses that speak about heart attitudes, and lifestyles, and behaviors. It seems that no matter how much we learn about God, it still comes right back down to the same understanding. That we just aren't like him in either our nature or our behaviors. We are inherently flawed, and He is inherently perfect and holy. At our very best we are unworthy servants, and all of the knowledge and wisdom in the world doesn't change this sad fact. Now I'm calling this a sad fact, and the fact itself is sad, but what's not sad is that we come to know and understand it. Because this is precisely what God intends.

God's love for us is beyond our ability to really comprehend, but everything that He wants us to know about it is learned from a background of comparison with the feeble and flawed love of man. God's love is totally void of all of the flaws and failures that beset our love. How would we know this and appreciate the value of his love if we didn't have our own pitiful kind of love to compare it to? And for this reason it's not sad but rather glorious to see God's perfect love projected against a background of man's pitiful imitation. It's this contrast, this comparison, that God is using to teach us the value of his perfect holy love. So while we can't help but be sad when we look at our own, we can truly rejoice in the knowledge that we are loved by God with a perfect and holy love, and He is going to grant us the ability to return that love in the same way when we've finished our learning tasks here on earth.

In this verse that were studying now, verse 14, Paul says that “beyond all these things.” What things is he talking about? He’s talking about everything that he’s said up to this point about behaviors and speech and attitudes and practices. He’s told us to abstain from, and put away, all of those previous works and attitudes of the flesh. He’s told us to bear with one another in a heart of compassion, and kindness, humility and gentleness and patience. He’s told us to forgive one another when we have a complaint against a brother or sister. But now he starts this verse with the words “beyond all these things.”

Beyond all these things is Paul’s way of saying that there’s a desired result of all of these things that is the greater end of them. There is a purpose in the lifestyle of godliness which is greater than the actions themselves. And this goes right to the heart of the relationship between God and man. In the eyes of God there’s a much greater purpose for this creature called man than just to teach them how to act and behave. The actions and behaviors and attitudes that are taught in the holy Scriptures have a purpose that is greater than themselves. God’s purpose for man is that he will become, through many trials and tribulations, conformed to the image of his beloved Son Jesus. (Romans 8:29)

All of the Scriptural teachings are put there not for the primary purpose of being regulatory, but for the purpose of being instructional and transformational. Yes of course they are regulatory. They do tell us how to behave and act and talk and think. But that’s not the intended end result, that’s not their primary purpose, but rather the means to achieve the primary purpose. And that primary purpose is to end up with a creature that is both capable and desiring to know and return the perfect love of God, which he then demonstrates by wilful obedience.

God could have, and did, create countless creatures called angels who obey his every command to perfection. But the Scriptures show us, they teach us, they reveal to us, that this holy and perfect God whom we serve, has created humans in His own image, so that we might have a unique relationship with the Almighty God. And that relationship is built firmly on a foundation called love.

Love, as described in the Scriptures, is something that is only understood by God and by his creatures called humans. It is, in fact, the final product of mankind. If mankind were to learn every statute and ordinance of God, and gain the ability to perform it to perfection, he would still not have accomplished the ultimate purpose for which God made him. All of the teaching, all of the wisdom and knowledge, all of the experiences of life, the triumphs and tragedies, are leading God’s chosen down a path to a specific conclusion.

This is perhaps why the example of a bride and a groom are used to characterize the relationship of Christ to his church. On the human level a wedding is the ultimate conclusion of love. It’s a lifetime commitment of one to another and the forsaking of all others. This indeed is an appropriate example of God’s intended relationship between himself and his creatures called humans. It’s a relationship founded on love one for the other, and the forsaking of all others for evermore.

This is precisely what was missing when Jesus, the Messiah, presented himself to his chosen people the Jews. They had spent considerable time and effort learning, and even memorizing, all his rules and regulations, but He told them that their hearts were still far away from him. For the nation of Israel, the laws of God never produced the end result that was required.

And the very same principle applies to that body that calls itself the church. Do we remember what Jesus said to the first Church that He spoke to in Chapter 2 of revelation? He said, I know your works, and He recognized that they were honorable, but then He said these words “but I have this against you, that you have left your first love,” and then He went on to say that if they didn’t get it back that all of their good works, as honorable as they might be, would not preserve their church.

He said that if they didn’t get back their first love He would come and take their lampstand away. So that we properly understand this; it doesn’t mean He will remove their salvation, it means He will dissolve the church as a corporate entity, because it isn’t serving its purpose. Even when all of its works are admittedly honorable, that alone isn’t enough to sustain a church, because if the works aren’t inspired by and contributing to the intended result, then the works alone are of no apparent value in the eyes of God.

You see, Jesus isn't building a well disciplined army, but rather a joyful and exuberant church, called His bride, (Revelation 19) who has made herself ready to be her mate by being transformed, and conformed to the image of her Savior, and not just in their actions, but perhaps even more so in their heart attitudes. All of the works will have helped produce the intended end result, she, the church, will love her mate with all her heart and all her soul, with all her mind and all her strength, because all that learning about him, and all those good works done in submission to Him, will in the end, have produced the intended love for him that He paid so dear a price to obtain. (It works both ways)

Now I can almost hear some of you thinking; but wait a minute Bob, you've always taught that it's the love that motivates the good works. Now you're saying it's the good works that build the love. Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying. It certainly is love that should be the motivator to obey Christ, but it's the obedience to Christ, the hands-on experiencing of all the things of Christ, that teaches us to value them. One learns the value of something by using it, by experiencing it, by first-hand exposure to it. Christ must be more than a just a beautiful set of rules and principles for us to love Him in a personal way. And his disciples learn to love him experientially by living, and thinking, and behaving just as He did, and by doing so they get to experience the same joys and fulfillment as Christ himself. His bride must come to love righteousness as much as He loves righteous, she must love compassion and kindness as much as he loves these things. Then, and only then, will she truly have been conformed to his image, both outside and inside, and made ready to stand at his side forevermore.

Now you guys know me, that I love theology, but theology's only purpose is to pave the road to a deeper and truer knowledge of God, and through that deeper and truer knowledge to enable us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is one of the few things that the scriptures tell us directly that God wants back from us. To love Him above all else, and to worship Him in a true spirit of awe, reverence, and affection is God's desire according to John 4:23. Paul told the Corinthians that if they didn't have love they weren't worth anything to God. (1Co 13:2-3)

As we mentioned earlier, the only created entity that God fashioned in his own likeness was human beings, who are the single and unique creatures who are able to understand and appreciate the heart of God. The only creatures capable of returning his love, and for this we were created. It's on this foundation of heartfelt love that the entire relationship between man and God is firmly secured. Yes obedience to God is mandated and expected and appropriate, but to love Him above all else is the very wellspring of everything in the relationship.

Do you remember how the Lord began His presentation of His 10 Commandments to his chosen people? What was the opening sentence that laid the foundation for the entire presentation of God's laws? Let me read that from Exodus chapter 20:

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. Ex 20:4-6 (NASB)

This is quite an amazing verse, because in this verse God declares to humanity that He, God is a jealous God. And so that we're perfectly clear, He goes on to say what He's jealous about. He's jealous over the attention, the affection's, and the love of His chosen people. He is passionate about whom it is that his people worship and love. And He demonstrates that jealousy by visible acts of either judgment or blessing. This is the opening declaration of the 10 Commandments, that it sits on a foundation of loving affection between God and his chosen people. It then goes on to tell us how God's chosen people should behave, but it starts by telling us why. If we aren't fulfilling the "why" then the whole purpose of the actions has been negated. And this is exactly what happened with the children of Israel. Although the Jews might have, for a while somewhat obeyed God's commandments, what they never seemed to attain, as a nation, was a passionate love of God like that demonstrated by David.

It seems that to most of them He remained a fearful and harsh taskmaster, whom they obeyed mostly for personal benefits derived or to avoid His judgements. This does not by any means fulfill the purpose of God. Unless one is obeying God from a passionate loving heart, that wants very much to please Him, then the obedience, in and of itself, would seem to be less than fully satisfying in God's eyes.

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying there's no value in obeying God. What I'm saying is that God made obedience as a tangible means by which those who really love him might demonstrate that love in a visible manner. In the 10 Commandments God establishes the underlying principle that genuine love is the very basis upon which one seeks to obey God. In the 10 Commandments God forever ties **love to obedience**. It is first and foremost love, not fear, that motivates obedience to God. Oh let's make no mistake, fear certainly does play its part, especially where love is wanting, but God's objective for His elect is first and foremost that while we do fear him, even more, we love and respect Him. And this is demonstrated by His declaration that He is a jealous God. He's not jealous of our fear, He's jealous of our attention, our affection, and our appreciation. (In other words, our worship)

Now again I want to say this, that myself and many others who take great pleasure in studying Scriptures, and examining them carefully and in-depth, must be very careful that we never allow God to become to us a set of rules and theologies. Oh yes, God does have rules, and theology is extremely important in understanding God correctly, but this is precisely where the Jews went wrong, when they failed to realize that the whole purpose of all of this was to establish a relationship of loving affection. If our theology ever becomes the issue of importance in and of itself, then we will have fallen into the same trap that the Jews did.

We might know all about God and all about his rules, but it's imperative that this knowledge achieves its purpose, which is to bring us into a deep reverence and passionate affection for our almighty loving God. All of our theology, all of our Bible study, must be for the purpose of bringing us into right relationship with our God. To love him with all our hearts and all our souls, and all our minds and all our strength, so that we will truly appreciate Him for who and what He is. God is jealous for our hearts, and He uses our minds as the instrument of understanding to achieve that result. And then He's given us a tangible set of rules to govern our lives, and it's by our observance of these rules that we can demonstrate the authenticity of our love for him. If you love me you'll keep my commands said Jesus. It might well be that in the eyes of God, that it's not so much the keeping of the rules themselves that's important to Him as it is the demonstration of our love for him in our doing so. You see, our obedience to God is the only means He's given us to demonstrate the authenticity of our love for Him, both to Him and to ourselves.

How do I know if my love for God is genuine? Quite simply, do I have a passionate desire to obey Him? Don't misunderstand my statement, I didn't say "do I perfectly obey Him," I said, do I have a passionate hearts desire to obey Him, and is that the driving force in my life. The actual execution of this is that lifelong road called sanctification, and is never completed in this lifetime. But neither is the effort ever abandoned either, regardless of the impossibility of the task. Because a genuine love of God forever motivates and fuels this sanctifying effort, because we understand that our obedience to Him is our only means to demonstrate our love for Him, and this we seek with a genuine passion.

And this brings us right back now to Paul's statement that we're discussing that says "beyond all these things." Why is it beyond all the things previously discussed? Because it is the only authentic foundation for all of them. No matter how much we might know, or how noble our efforts, or how great our accomplishments, when all has been said and done, and God puts it all in the furnace of testing, will it be precious like gold or perishable like straw? Were all our works performed from a foundation of love and affection to God? If not, they are but perishable straw.

Let me say something here. If your idea of, and desire for heaven, is that it's the place where you believe your dear grandmother is, or your Mom and Dad, or your children or your grandchildren, or your departed spouse, and you can't wait to get there so you can be reunited with them, then I may shock you with this; but if that's why you desire heaven, then you quite likely aren't going there yourself. Oh my goodness, why would I make such a statement you ask? Because God says that He's a jealous God for our affections. If **He** isn't the first and foremost reason that we desire to be in His kingdom, then our hearts surely aren't where He demands for entrance. Of course it'll be great to meet all the others, but only those whose hearts are captured first and foremost by the love of God will be there to enjoy all those other lesser benefits.

Now if you will, let me interject here a point of clarification. We've been discussing the love of God. And the love of God is a topic which surpasses human understanding. An examination of the love of God would be inexhaustible. However, there are multiple perspectives to consider when contemplating the love of God. The most common perspective is to consider the character and nature of God's love, and much has been said and written on this aspect.

But the discussion that we've had so far is from a different perspective. We're discussing the aspect of the **priority** of Love in God's master creation plan. We're not discussing its character, but rather its place and position. And from this perspective it is truly a foundational element. God's whole creation plan began with His heart attitude of love, first for His beloved Son, and then extending to His human creatures. Love was the underlying initiator of God's creation, and it's also the desired and intended end product of it.

According to the apostle Peter, this present heaven and earth is going to be destroyed by fire, and in Revelation chapter 21 we see that God creates a whole new heaven and earth when this existing one has served its purpose. All of time and tangible matter will be burned up, and all of mankind that despised God will be forever put away from His presence. So what will be left? What will be left is a small remnant of mankind that has been redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and conformed to the image of God's beloved Son. This small remnant is all that will be left of the entirety of the creation that we know. This remnant will love the Lord God with all their hearts and all their souls, with all their minds at all their strength, and this is what God set out to do when He created the universe. The end product of it all will be a family that loves Him as He loves them. In very simplistic terms, this is what the whole thing is all about, and it has been from the very beginning.

The present age terminates with a uniting of the Son of God to His created beings, who are described as His bride, for whom, because of His great love, He has given His very life to redeem from their sins, and transform, through His indwelling spirit, into a suitable mate for Himself. This is a very particular chosen family. A family that was conceived and created and fashioned by God to be His eternal worshipers. And, at the very center of this family, is this thing called love. It is the perfect bond of unity, as verse 14 concludes. It's both the foundation upon which it is built, and the purpose for which it was meant, when God set out to create the heavens and the earth and all the creatures it contains.

It is love that forms that final and perfect bond which holds the entire kingdom of God together. It isn't His omnipotent power that God chose to use to rule His kingdom, but rather a perfect and holy love. A self sacrificing kind of love that puts the needs of others ahead of self, just for the sheer joy of doing so. A place without jealousy, and envy, and resentment, but rather of perfect contentment and eternal joyful affection all for one another. This is the power God has chosen to unify and bond together His eternal kingdom. It is the perfect choice. All inhabitants willingly and joyfully submissive to one another, without any coercion required. Can anyone even perceive a more perfect situation where countless millions could reside together forever without conflict or discord? Love is indeed the one and only Perfect Bond of Unity that exists in the cosmos, or in the imagination of man or God. God created love, not force, as His "adhesive agent" to bond together His everlasting kingdom. This indeed is perfect.

However, there's still more that we have to understand on this subject. We acknowledge that the eternal kingdom of God wasn't designed to be a theological University for higher education, but an eternal home for a passionate and loving family. But having said that, now let me say this, there is no arrival at this end product except through a right and proper understanding of God. Right theology is an essential element in the production of this final loving family. Let me explain this further.

There are more people than we can count who say they love God. They call him by many different names, and perceive him in many different ways, but they all say that they love God. And in fact they do love god. But they love a god that they've invented in their own minds. This is a theologyless god, who unconditionally loves everybody. As Arthur Pink puts it, the God of maudlin sentimentality. Created out of the emotions and desires of one's own heart. A god fashioned by ourselves in our own image, and to our own liking. It's easy to love this God. He makes no demands and sets no standards. He forgives everyone and judges no one. He exists solely for the purpose of fulfilling our needs, and granting our desires. A god who is thoroughly content to quietly and patiently wait in the background for us to summon him to action when we feel we need him, and then step right back into hiding until we summon him again.

The vast majority of people that sit in the pews of the evangelical churches every Sunday morning are there to worship this god we've just described. You see the love of God, as precious and wonderful as it is, like everything else about God, is abused and misused, both by Satan and by the vast majority of humanity. And especially by those who go to church. The average church goer will spend about an hour on Sunday morning singing pretty hymns and expecting an emotionally stirring sermon from their pastor, and then go home and completely forget about God until next week.

But that's okay you see, because their god is a loving god, who has no greater expectations, and exists only to be a loving and forgiving father to all his well intentioned, but occasionally misbehaving children.

You see we don't even really comprehend the tragedy of this until we understand the true nature, and character, and priority of the genuine and true God; who God really is, and what He expects. That He is perfectly holy and righteous, and yet, He still is passionately jealous for our affections and our attention. To treat Him so casually, and so abuse the love of God will by no means bring anyone His praise. And so far as being suitable worship, as the prophet Malachi told the Jews, it would be preferable to God if someone would just close the door of the sanctuary and send everybody home. And the prophet Amos told the children of Israel that the songs that they sing are but an irritating noise to His ears, and the offerings of praise that they bring are unacceptable, even a contemptible offensive in His sight . (Amos 5)

In any discussion of the love of God, regarding either its character or its priority, it's imperative that one understands the true nature and character of God himself. To worship Him in spirit and in truth is the only acceptable means of worship. To fain worship when your heart isn't in it, or to offer it enthusiastically to some fictitious god that you've created in your own mind, not only negates the usefulness of worship, it even constitutes an offense in His eyes. It is for this reason that many Christians, and I'm one of them, often find ourselves uncomfortable when we listen to some of the sermons preached, and some of the practices that take place in the contemporary evangelical churches today.

While we dare not ever become embittered about the love of God, nevertheless it's impossible sometimes not to be troubled when one sees and hears the abuses that take place under the guise of a loving God. When one sees God redefined according to human sentiment rather than the majestic God of the Bible. When one sees the love of God used as a license for every kind of ungodliness and disobedience, a true Christian cannot help but wince with discomfort.

When one sees the sovereign majestic God of the Bible reduced to a powerless impotent entity, whose purposes are constantly being thwarted, and whose plans are constantly being disrupted, all those who know the true God, and know the love of this true God, cannot help but suffer pain in their hearts at such blasphemy. **There is no virtue, no merit, no benefit, in loving and worshiping a fictitious god.** If we say we love God, then it's imperative that we know what we mean by that. What God do we love, the God described in the Bible, or the god we've invented in our mind? Make no mistake, it does make a difference, it makes all the difference, because not all gods are the same, and not every road leads to the one true God. In fact, there's thousands of false gods, and thousands of false roads that lead to these false gods, Matthew seven verses 13 and 14 speak specifically of this.

The inescapable fact is, that there is but one true God, and every other god is a fake. And there's only one way to know the true God, and that's through the study of the Scriptures that He's given us for this very purpose, of knowing Him and exposing the frauds. It's entirely possible, even commonplace to have a love for your god that's absolutely true, but if that true and passionate love is for a fictitious god that you've created in your mind, or been taught by false teachers, then you are unknowingly in love with, and betrothed to, an idol. A false god who will break your heart and leave you destitute and condemned at the very moment when you need it the most.

Just because you're sure that your own love is genuine, doesn't mean that the one you love is true. Your genuine love doesn't make a false god true. One must be very careful to whom they commit themselves and give their hearts, or they may find that commitment to be their ultimate undoing. Not only must your love be true, but the One to whom you commit your love must likewise be true. Anyone who blindly and frivolously commits their heart and affections is laying themselves open to deception, and there's no shortage of deceivers just waiting for this kind of people. Look at those who demonstrated the authenticity of their love by following false teachers and false messiahs to their tragic deaths.

The scriptures tell us that unregenerate men intrinsically love evil. And that love that they feel for evil is genuine. They really do love it. Just love, in and of itself, doesn't make anything true, or good, or godly. Many are those who believe that if the love they're feeling is real, then the object of that love must also be real, and good, and be from God. After all, don't the scriptures say that God is love? So if it's love, then it must be from God, right? The scriptures teach no such thing. In fact quite the opposite. No matter how deeply or truly you may love a lying and cheating spouse, they are still a lying cheating spouse. Your love, no matter how genuine, doesn't make their actions either good or godly. Even God's genuine, perfect and holy love for mankind, doesn't make mankind good, or righteous, or holy.

So, what are we saying? We're saying that both our love must be true and genuine, and the One to whom we commit that love must be true and genuine. Either one without the other isn't just short, it's disastrous. **Neither a true God that you don't really love, nor a false god that you do really love will ever end up happily.** Either one will leave you disappointed and destitute on the very day you expected to be your glorious union.

Like the 10 virgins referred to in the gospel of Matthew, many who really believe they're on the verge of a glorious union with their one true love, will find themselves locked out because they're missing a vital ingredient. And the ceremony will go on without them. Using this parable, only those with the oil in their lamps will be taken in the wedding ceremony, and the Spirit this parable represents is that which teaches and draws the true bride, to the true groom, with a genuine and passionate love and affection.

If I may borrow from another parable, the sheep of the true Good Shepherd recognize His voice and they will not follow another but will flee when they hear them call. This parable is an example of those who are passionate for the word of God and study it diligently, as it is by this, and this alone, that they can come to know the voice of their real Shepherd, and are thereby able to discern the calls of the thieves and robbers. Just as a sheep learns its shepherd by the repetition of hearing his voice, the bride of Christ learns her Groom's voice by the constant repetition of hearing it through the holy scriptures. She's been given no other way of learning His identity and recognizing His characteristics. And she comes to know Him and to love Him by this constant and intimate interaction.

Now let me interject something here. An astute Bible student might say; hey Bob these verses seem to be speaking more about human to human, than human to God. My answer to that is that they certainly are talking human to human, but not as a contrast, but as a logical extension. These verses are telling us that love is the perfect bond of unity. Scripture isn't seeking to find a perfect bond of unity for human beings only, but a perfect bond of unity between mankind themselves and their Savior and Creator. Any bond of man to man that misses the connection with God is simply a carnal love. Love is the bond that not only holds man together, but much more, holds God's affections forever bound to His chosen. To see these verses only from the carnal fleshly perspective is to seriously miss the whole point. It's precisely because all of those involved love the same God, that they therefore consequentially love one another.

And we see the practical application of this all the time. I suspect we've all been to churches that speak about and sing about love of one to another, but when it's examined closely it becomes readily apparent that this love of which they're speaking has little or nothing to do with the genuine love of God himself. This is but another example of that which we've already discussed concerning the authenticity of the one who is the object of our love. Just because you're attending a church that treats you very lovingly doesn't necessarily mean that this church is worshiping the true God. In fact churches that know how to exploit carnal love for the sake of church growth are the current fad.

So how does one know if the loving church they're attending really has their affections placed on the true living God? The good news is there are ways to know. First, the church worshiping the true God puts obedience to His word before the concerns of the flesh. Both the 10 Commandments of the Old Testament, and the epistles of the New Testament each tell us how to tell the difference. And in every case, obedience to the Word of God is the authenticator.

A genuine love, for the true and living God, is always demonstrated by a passionate desire to obey the commandments of God. And this is exactly what we have here in our study of Colossians chapter 3. We've been shown how a Christian should demonstrate their faith through the way they live, and the reason they do this is because of genuine love, first for their Lord, and then spilling over onto one another, and binding them all together in perfect, and joyful, and voluntary unity.

Have you ever experienced a church conference, or some other gathering, where everyone you met just seem to be overflowing with the love of God, and everyone agreed on everything that was preached. I've had the pleasure of experiencing some of these, and I'll tell you, this is as close as we get while here on this earth to getting a taste of what the eternal kingdom of God will actually be like. No force, no coercion is necessary here, everyone is anxious from their heart to serve their Lord and to serve one another, just for the sheer joy that it brings. This is the bonding power of pure and holy love in action.

Conclusion:

This is the eternal kingdom that our God is preparing for His chosen people. This is what perfect love produces, a place without contention or resentment, without personal ambitions or self-seeking motives. This is a kingdom which can endure forever without divisions, because every underlying reason for division will have been eliminated. Everyone there will be thoroughly and totally content with their condition, and eternally grateful and joyful just to be there.

Everyone there will know that they've received infinitely more than they deserve, and know who it is they have to thank for this; and for this reason they will all have the same first love. All questions of theology will be forever settled. All debts and offenses will have been forever resolved completely. Everyone there will think the same way, want the same things, and share the same affections and appreciations. And the sheer magnificent beauty of this is that all of it will take place not because of coercion, but because everyone there truly wants this themselves with all their hearts and all their souls, with all their minds and all their strength, and God will have attained for Himself that which He set out to produce when He created the heavens and the earth and all the living creatures.

Love is that binding adhesive that God created to hold together forever, this perfect eternal kingdom, and therefore its priority and position in the plan of God cannot possibly be overstated. Rightly has it been said that without love, truly we would have nothing.

To Him be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami
Robert Andrews, Pastor
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