

Love of God II

Fred R. Coulter—March 11, 1995

Have you ever wondered if there's any connection between all of the weather problems, upset things, and political problems we have in the United States today, and the condition of the Churches of God? There very well may be a connection

Here's what happens, Matthew 24:11: "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many.... [What happens when deception comes in?] ...And because lawlessness shall be multiplied... [iniquity grows, sin increases] ...the love of many shall grow cold" (vs 11-12). I would have to say that the majority of us may have come from circumstances where we never really have understood love—even in the sense of family love, personal love, friendship love—in the way that we ought to know and experience as human beings.

Everywhere you look on television today it is iniquity upon iniquity, and deception upon deception on an ongoing basis. Our minds are literally flooded with it, and filled with it almost beyond our ability to comprehend how bad it is. I heard a teenage girl expressing her delight in this movie, and how funny it really was, and it was really a very bad movie because it was killing and murder and mayhem, and all of the perverse things you're seeing today; especially with cartoons for children. They're being fed demonic, perverse things of the worst sort.

- How can we understand the love of God?
- How can we understand how to love each other?

I think that is the greatest sin that is in the Churches of God today. They don't know, they don't understand, they don't comprehend, nor do they preach, nor do they study about the love of God.

Let's go to 2-Peter 3:3 where we find the way that the society is; it's difficult. You can't trust anyone. You can't help anyone, because someone is out there trying to take advantage of you. Someone is out there trying to rip you off; someone is out there trying to do you in. How many here have ever experienced the betrayal by a friend? *I mean a real betrayal!* Devastating—isn't it? How many have experienced that within the Church? *Yes!* I raised my hand with that one, too. Isn't that more devastating? Someone that you trusted? Someone that you confided in? Someone you thought would stand with you through thick and thin—right? Didn't do it—did they? *No!*

That's why God inspired that one of the apostles that was called was Judas; so that we would understand that the love of God can only come when we truly love God in spite of everything that goes around us. In the hymnal there's a song from the Psalm, which goes (paraphrased): 'Twas not a foe that did me in. It was my friend, a guide. And we sat down and had meals together, talked together. But his words were smoother than butter and in his heart was deceit.' We find much the same thing right here that we have in the world today and the way that religion is.

2-Peter 3:3. "Knowing this first [primarily], that in the last days *there* will come mockers..." These are not only just atheist, these are religious scoffers. Have you been hearing that lately? 'God didn't mean what He said. God's Word is not what He wrote.' Scoffing at it.

Verse 4: "And asking, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' For ever since the forefathers died, everything has remained the same as from *the* beginning of creation. But this *fact* is hidden from them—they themselves choosing *to ignore it*—that by the Word of God *the* heavens existed of old, and *the* earth came forth out of water and amid water, by which the world at that time, having been deluged with water, had itself been destroyed" (vs 4-6). Didn't learn a single thing—did they? *No!* The Flood didn't teach them one lesson.

Then we find what that leads to in relationship to people who claim they know God; who claim to be religious; who claim to understand God's way.

2-Timothy 3:1: "Know this also, that in *the* last days perilous times shall come; for men will be lovers of self..." (vs 1-2). Never have we had a time when all that the children learn now in school is *self-esteem*. That just builds vanity and ego. Unless people know that love comes from God, they can't have it. Unless they know that God Himself created everyone in His image, they can't have any self-esteem or self-worth. So, they love themselves. Look what we have. Then it list all the things again:

"...of self, lovers of money, braggarts, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, savage, despisers of those who are good, betrayers, reckless, egotistical, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having an outward appearance of godliness, but denying the power of *true* godliness. But *as for you*, turn away from *all* these." (vs 2-5). I think I just

described some of experiences within the Church of God—did I not? *Yes! Why? Because they don't know the love of God!* They don't have a clue.

I think that when we come understand how great the love of God is, and how important it is for us in our lives; and how that is the greatest, and most fulfilling thing we can do as human beings, is to understand the love of God and love each other in the way God wants us to, that we have not really been preaching the Gospel.

- We've been preaching **about** Christ.
- *We have not been preaching Christ!*
- We've been preaching about law.
- *We have not been preaching about love.*
- We've been preaching doom and gloom
- We've been preaching to repent *in fear* from the doom and gloom.
- *Rather than repent because God loves you!*

All backwards! It was the same thing in Christ's day. Again this sounds just like the church experience we have been in.

Luke 11:42: "But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every herb, but you pass over the judgment and the love of God." Just pass over, just completely leave it behind. How many sermons have you heard, in your past church experience, of the love of God? *Probably very few!* I know one time someone came up to me and they said, 'You know this church organization does not have very much love. Now, there's more here in this congregation, but truly there is no love.' And I said, 'Ah no, you can't be right.' I gave a sermon on love. I didn't have a clue, brethren, *I did not have a clue!* You don't solve the problem by preaching a sermon; I have learned that:

- God wants you to *experience* His love,
- God wants you to *feel* His love,
- God wants you to *express* His love.

Have you ever felt loved by God down to very depths of your soul? Sometimes you can't know that's there unless you experience some difficulties along the way. So yes, they pass over the love of God, because if you pass over the love of God, then you don't have to get down to the realities of life. You don't have to examine your own heart, mind and soul.

What we are going to talk about is the greatest thing, the greatest character attribute, the most fulfilling aspect of your Christian life, and the very reason and purpose why you were called. This then strips away all playing of religion and gets us where we need to be.

I'm going to cover every place in the Epistles of John where he talks about the love of

God, and behold, there are 46! Is the love of God important? *Yes, indeed!*

1-John 4:8: "The one who does not love does not know God because God is love." How could you ever really know the true Truth, the whole Truth about God, unless you know the love of God? were taught the love of God?

Verse 9: "In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him." If you remember, John 3:16 says, 'For God so loved the world.' I'm going to have a couple of sermons starting there when I talk about the love of Christ and what He did to be the Passover sacrifice for us—that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone'—meaning anyone, any person. This is not restricted.

God wants that relationship with each one. God has perfect love and can perfectly love everyone in the world. That's something! God is not going around looking for people to correct, looking for people to put down, looking for people to put them in fear. ***God is looking for those who really desire a relationship with Him, with His love!*** That's what God wants. That's why He sent Christ.

Verse 8: "The one who does not love does not know God because **God is love.**"

Verse 10: "In this *act*, is **the love**... [that's the way it is in the Greek]...not that we loved God... [we don't learn the love of God until He first loves us] ...rather, that He loved us and sent His Son *to be the propitiation* for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are duty-bound to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. *Yet*, if we love one another, God dwells in us, and His own love is **perfected** in us" (vs 10-12).

How's a person going to know that God loves them? *Well, when they come to Sabbath services, because Sabbath is to be a day that we fulfill!* Do you understand the difference between just keeping and fulfilling? The difference is this: *if you keep, you go by the letter of the law; if you fulfill, you gather the full spiritual meaning out of the whole day!* So, the Sabbath should be a day to fulfill. That begins with what? *Fellowshipping with God the Father and Jesus Christ* (as we learned in the first chapter), 'Indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and His own Son, Jesus Christ.' When we **fulfill** the Sabbath, rather than just observed the Sabbath, then we get the benefit out of it and God's Spirit that He wants us to have.

God is looking for those people that want to fellowship with Him. When we have God's Spirit in us and we fellowship with each other, that is Christ

in us/the Father in us, showing and expressing love to those that He has called. That puts everything in an entirely different basis—doesn't it? Why should you come to church and be fearful?

- You cannot ever have the love of God with a *spy system*.
- You cannot ever have the love of God with a *fear system*.
- You cannot ever have the love of God with *command and control*.

It just won't work! We're duty-bound to love one another with God dwelling in us; that's how it is perfected. The love of God is the perfect love and ***our whole lifetime goal is to let that love be perfected in us!*** That may require suffering; that may require trials; that may require things that there are times you're going to say, 'God, what on earth are You doing?' God works things out far differently than we think they should be because He wants that love *perfected* in us.

Verse 13: "By this *standard*... [by this means] ...we know that we are dwelling in Him..."—present tense. Let's understand past tense was yesterday, future tense is tomorrow. We don't know what we're going to do tomorrow, and we know what we did yesterday we can't do anything about. That's why this is in the present tense, *loving*, because that's what God is interested in, what you are *doing*—not what you plan to do, not what you have done—but what you *are doing*. That's why it's written this way. It's magnificent the way it's written.

Verse 13: "...By this *standard* we know that we are dwelling in Him, and He *is dwelling* in us: because of His own Spirit, *which* He has given to us. And we have seen *for* ourselves and bear witness that the Father sent the Son *as the* Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God" (vs 13-15).

Confessing is very profound. You cannot confess that He is and do like the Catholics and remove the second Commandment and have idols and have statues and have saints and all of this sort of thing. You are not confessing Christ truly. You are using His name. So, this means the true confession.

Verse 16: "And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him." Brethren, that is the highest form of Christianity that God wants us to have. This is what we need to be perfecting. This is what we need to be working toward.

Verse 16: "And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love... [that's describing His highest characteristic] ...and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. By this *spiritual indwelling*, **the love of God is perfected** within us..." (vs 16-17).

It is ***the love***, because it is ***the love*** which comes from ***the God***, which means it's an ongoing perfecting,

- as we are walking
- as we are growing
- as we are praying
- as we are studying
- as we live our lives and understand what the love that God has for us
- how we can love each other

I would just have to say, brethren, that years ago we didn't have a clue as to what that really was, what it really is.

It's to be: "...perfected within us, so that we may have confidence in the **day of judgment**..." (v 17). Not fear—***confidence!*** One of the worst things in the world that has been done in the name of Christ is to constantly, every week, *put the brethren in fear that they're going to lose their salvation*.

- God didn't call you to lose salvation!
- God didn't call you to give His Spirit to take it away!

He did not!

- He gave His Spirit that it may be perfected.
- He gave His Spirit because He loves you.

Just the opposite!

That's a tremendous thing. We need to really have confidence in the 'day of judgment' so when the 'day of judgment' comes, what is God the Father going to see? *Christ standing there in our stead*—right? *Yes!* This is the great and tremendous thing that God does. This is a clue for overcoming: ***When you're loving God, you're overcoming!*** You are overcoming. When you're focusing on that, you don't have to beat sin to death. You try it, you'll see.

If you've never experienced the love of God, I'll tell you what to do. You're praying, you ask God to help you understand the love of God. ***He will! He'll answer that prayer!*** Continue praying that and the day will come when you will be praying you will ***feel*** that love of God, and you will ***know*** that love of God, and you will ***know*** that it is true, because it comes from God the Father directly to you. You will have confidence. No fear! No torment!

"...because even as He is, so also are we in this world" (v 17). Think on that! That is a

tremendous promise! When you're loving God that way, God imputes His righteousness to you, the very righteousness of Christ:

- to inspire us to do good
- to inspire us to love God
- to inspire us to overcome

If and when you sin, which you will, Christ is there cleansing us from every unrighteousness, every sin. Why? *Because He wants you in the Kingdom of God*, that's why!

Verse 18: "**There is no fear in the love of God...**" I'm beginning to understand that. Therefore, you cannot run a Church of God on fear. The greatest thing of the Gospel is the love of God—is it not? If you're going to preach the Gospel and you're going to serve the people of God, how can you do with fear?

"...rather, perfect love casts out..." (v 18). It is a process. As God is perfecting that love in you and you are striving, with God's Spirit, to grow in that love—which is the greatest fulfillment of your whole life. I want you to understand that. This is a long-term, lifelong goal. This is something that we need to grow in every day; it's not just something that comes all at once—you will have experiences when that happens—but it's a continuous thing.

"...casts out fear..." (v 18). What does that do for keeping your job and Sabbath? God will take care of it! You don't have to worry; you may have to suffer a little bit, but you don't have to worry. Now, that may sound contradictory, but you don't have to worry, God will take care of it!

"...because fear has torment... [and when you have torment and you have fear] ...**the one who fears has not been made perfect in the love of God**" (v 18). That, brethren, is the biggest sin of the Churches of God today. It can be corrected, God wants it changed, but we have to be willing. We have to go to God and say, 'God, I don't have a clue. Please help me to understand. Please guide and lead me with Your Spirit.'

Verse 19: "We love Him **because He loved us first**.... [Never forget that. He first loved us. That all ties in with the Passover.] ...If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar...." (vs 19-20). I'll tell you, the politics and stuff that have gone on in the Churches of God—the hatred, the vehemence, the back-stabbing—there was not the love of God. Were there liars? *Yes, absolutely!* You can apply this to any church. You can go to the Seventh Day Adventist, Church of God Seventh Day, or Sunday-keeping churches. You get on these boards and the politics that are there.

I talked to a man who used to be a Baptist and he was on all of these boards and everything like that; it just gets so carnal. Who's going to be promoted, who's going to be ordained, who's going to be a Sunday school teacher, and superintendent? *Backbiting and all that nonsense!*

"...For if he does not love his brother whom he had seen, how is he able to love God Whom he has not seen?" (v 20). You can put any name there! If you have family troubles put the name of the one you're having family troubles with. Do you a great deal of good; did me a great deal of good. Sometimes you have children that their behavior is such that you almost literally hate them. God says if you hate them you're not loving God. Well, how do you solve the problem then?

- You can't solve it by yelling and screaming, because that won't do it.
- You can't solve it by discipline, because it's way beyond that if it's deteriorated.

I've found a way to solve those things: Put it in God's hands, and say, 'God, You alone can solve this. Help me to do my part, but please put in the mind of this person what *You* want.' God can change a mind—can He not?

- Did not God call you?
- Did He not change your mind?
- Do you not have enough faith that God can change that person's mind?

Just put it in God's hand and let Him do it! *Yes!* That solves a whole lot of problems. Then you may have the experience of the prodigal son coming home—that's a tremendous experience, believe me! *Love works*, and God will make sure that it works if we're crying out to Him so that it does work, because it's the greatest thing there is.

Verse 21: "And this *is* the commandment *that* we have from Him: that the one who loves God should also love his brother."

Now, let's come to 1-Corinthians 13. I'm going to read out of the *Interlinear*. One time a person asked me what translation of the Bible 'do you use?' And it never dawned on me, that when I read the *King James*, I read what it *should read* because I've studied the Greek behind it. In much of my teaching and preaching I use the *Interlinear*, because I have the English and the Greek. Now unfortunately in the old *King James* 1-Cor 13 translates the Greek word for love—'agape'—as *charity*—and that is really a very unfortunate translation.

As you know, there are three words for love in the Greek:

1. ‘eros’—not in the New Testament—is *sexual desire and love*, which can be perverted into erotica.

That’s what most of the world knows today, nothing but erotica.

2. ‘phileo’—from which we get the word *Philadelphia*, the lover of the brethren.

That is just human affection, and human love toward human beings and between human beings, and there is precious little of that; there is some of it still in the world, but precious little.

3. ‘agape’—the highest form of love—Godly, Divine love—which only God can give as a gift.

This Godly, Divine love also, because of the sacrifice of Christ, can be referred to as *sacrificial love*, because you will do in love for the other person, without seeking anything in return. Also, ‘agape’ love is the highest and the greatest love we can attain because it *comes from God* and is one of His greatest characteristics.

1-Corinthians 13:8 (*Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. “Love never fails...” Think on that! Have you ever wanted a sure thing in your life? We’d all like to have a sure thing on making money, and that’s how a lot of people get taken down the garden path—right? ‘This is a sure thing; put your money in it.’ *Gone!* A lot of these people who invested their retirement funds into derivatives—*gone!* How many are in derivatives in the Mexican market today? *Gone!* Fails!

- Health fails!
- Friends fail!
- You fail!
- The whole society is going to fail!

But there is one thing that *never* fails: **the love of God!**

“...**Love never fails**... [in the Greek it is *the* love, with a definite article] ...**never fails**...” (v 8).

Verse 13: “And now abides faith, hope, love; these three things; but the **greater** of these [is] love.” The *King James* has the ‘greatest.’ How great is love? How important is love? *It is the greatest and it never fails!* There is nothing else in this world that you can compare to that—is that not correct? *Yes!*

Let’s begin to understand how the Apostle Paul really brings home the point. I want you to understand this in relationship to the whole backdrop of all the problems in the churches at Corinth. I remember one time a person asked me, ‘What church era do you think we’re in?’ I said, ‘Well, if you could express any church era we’re in, I would say 1-Corinthians,’ because every problem that’s in 1-Corinthians you see: follow this man, follow that

man; divisions, heresies; weird, odd doctrines; adultery, fornication; corruption, taking people to court; wanting to have Pentecostal experiences, speaking in tongues; and who’s the greatest and all of this sort of thing.

Who has the Spirit of God? What organization is it in? ***It’s not in any organization; it’s in you!*** They got so bad that they were saying in 1-Cor. 15, that the Resurrection didn’t occur; there’s no resurrection. I mean, within the Church of God! Think of that with the backdrop of all of this: you got your Christ party; your Peter party; your Apollos party. So he says, ‘Brethren, I want to show you a better way.’

1-Corinthians 12:31 (*Int*): “Be [zealous or be desirous or] emulous but the gifts better, and yet more surpassing [or, a more excellent] a way to you I shew.” Let’s understand, as I’ve mentioned before, Paul is talking about himself. This is a twofold application. And you could also have a threefold application: to Christ, to you, and to the ministers.

Notice what he says, 1-Corinthians 13:1 (*Int*): “If with the tongues of men I speak and of angels, but love have not, I have become brass sounding or a cymbal clanging.”

So much just un-orchestrated noise. The best expression I can think of that is: if you would take a sharp instrument and run it backwards on a blackboard—it just grates right down to the nerves. So, love is more important than communicating, even if you could speak all languages of the world. You’d be thought of a great person—right? Even if you could bring in something new, and whatever the language of the angels would be, you could speak that and have not the love of God—*nothing!*

Verse 2: “And if I have prophecy...” That’s what everyone wants; people want prophecy. Are not churches built on prophecy? There’s even one magazine that comes out, *Prophecy Flash*. Boy! You can get a following if you want a following, if you want lots of people, you tell them prophecy. *Yes!* That’s why they sell so many of these weird tabloids at the checkout stand. That’s why so many people come into churches—they want to know! Listen, if you understood every prophecy, but didn’t know Christ:

Verse 2: “And if I have prophecy, and know [the] mysteries all and all [the] knowledge... [You had the greatest brain in the world, you understood every philosophy, you understood everything that there was concerning human experience.] ...and if I have all faith, so as mountains to remove...”

Faith is important— isn’t it? *Without faith it’s impossible to please God*—correct? But if you

had faith to where you could move mountains—earth moving faith. I'll tell you, if anyone wanted to build a church, get earth moving faith and get yourself the media and have them come out there and put this on television, immediately you would have millions of followers—right? You would have them coming to you by the trainload, by the planeload, by the carload, by the busload and just saying, 'Heal me! Change this! Change that! Change everything!'

If you had all of these things and even earth moving faith, but you have not love, what you amount to? Paul's talking of himself. Every minister ought to read that and say that of himself. Every person needs to understand that in relationship to the love of God you can have all these things, but if you don't have love the truth is the other way around; ***you will never have any of these things unless you have love!***

- Do you think God is going to give earth-moving faith to someone who doesn't love Him?
- Do you think God is going to give knowledge to someone that doesn't love Him? *No!*

What if you're a philanthropic person and you give things? There are a lot of people who give things away and have big charity things—don't they? They like to get their name in the paper. That's how you get well-healed in the establishment. They have all of theirs—don't they?

Verse 3: "And if I give away in food all my goods [to feed the poor], and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned..." That's quite a sacrifice— isn't it? Never will forget on the news one time during the Vietnam War. They showed this Buddhist priest, and he got down in the lotus position, poured himself with gasoline, crossed his arms, struck the match and burned himself to a crisp to protest the war. If you don't have the love of God it doesn't do anything. You can even do that, the greatest self-sacrificing, outgoing thing you could do, if you don't have the love of God, it's nothing.

"...but love have not, nothing I am profited" (v 3). So this gives us a comparison as to how important love is. Love never fails and love is the greatest.

In preaching the Gospel, what do you think should be the main focus of what we should preach? Granted, love takes a little longer, because:

- love is a process
- love is an experience
- love is something you live and go through

Here's what love does for you. It allows you to have these qualities. You can't work this kind of love up. You can't just get a feeling in your heart or whatever it may be, and work this up.

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit... [comes from the Holy Spirit of God] ...the fruit of the Spirit is love..." When you truly have love, then love enables you to have joy. I know sometimes I would read that and think of my experience in the Church and say, 'I'm miserable.' No joy!

I would like to read and describe to you Christ's view of the Church. People like to beat up on the Laodiceans—don't they? *Yes!* What if Laodiceanism is an age? What if we've all been Laodiceans all along? What if what we are experiencing is that *we are repenting Laodiceans?* *Yes!* The Laodiceans have been labeled as the worst and the nastiest thing in the world. They're not! Christ says, 'I love you'—does He not?

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God." Let me just mention something right here: this the active tense, 'the beginning,' the subject in the nominative case, meaning *the cause*, not in the accusative case, 'having received' as the first beginning of the creation of God, the first creature that way. This the beginning cause.

Verse 15: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot.... [I want you to understand think about your church experience.] ...So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth" (vs 15-16). These are in the body of Christ already. You can't be vomited up unless you're in the body. One minister said, with all the troubles going on: 'Well, I just try and stay right in the middle.' And I said, 'What does that describe? *A perfect Laodicean: neither hot nor cold—but right in the middle.*'

Verse 17: "For you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy..." I don't know of any church in the history of the Church of God, that had sent to it over \$4-billion—that's a lot of money—and didn't even preach the love of God. You know why it's going down? *That's why!*

"...become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and you do not understand that you are wretched... [This has described our church experience—right? Isn't that true?] ...and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (v 17). Have you ever tried to talk to someone who doesn't want to open their eyes? 'Don't bother me with the facts.

Don't confuse me with the Truth. What ever they say, I will do.' *Setting yourself up for a deception.*

Verse 18: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire... [When we repent God wants us to go for the gold, which is His love. That's what so important. That's what He wants us to get: **His** love.] ...purified by fire... [So you're going to have some difficulties in it; it does not come easy.] ...that you may be rich... [If you're rich in Christ, who cares about anything else—right?] ...and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed..." Which means **God is going to expose it all!**

(go to the next track)

If God exposes the whole world for what it is, do you think that God is going to hide and cover the things of the Church of God that were sin and corruption and let it never be known? *No!* Jesus said, 'That which is spoken in secret is going to be shouted from the house tops.' And I guarantee you, brethren, part of the punishment for all of the things that have been done in the name of God—which should never have been done—you are going to hear and understand some of the most horrendous, unthinkable things. May they all repent! But God is not going to let that go without being exposed.

"...and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see" (v 18). I'll have to just tell you, that part of the experience we have gone through, and if you listen to some of the older sermons, you will see, BANG! 'Well I never saw that before. I never thought of that before. I didn't know that was in here before.' What's happening? *You're seeing—right? What's the greatest thing you need to see? The love of God, the Word of God, that's what He wants you to see!*

Verse 19: "As many as I love... [While different ministers may hate the Laodiceans, Christ says *He loves them.* That's what we need to focus on.] ...I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent." That's all God wants. As I've said many, many times if you think you're so far gone you can't repent, read about King Manasseh. He went through everything—didn't he? Fifty-five years of Bill Clinton, I've said before. Yes, he repented! So there's hope!

Now back to Galatians 5:22, these are the **fruits of the Spirit**, so if we haven't had them in the past, we haven't exercised the Spirit—right? *Yes!* "...love, joy, peace..." Instead of fear, *peace of mind.* That's something—isn't it? When you love God I guarantee you're going to have peace of mind. When you love God things can go on and you can understand God is going to work it out. You concentrate on loving God and expressing that love.

"...long-suffering..." (v 22) This means the capacity to suffer long. Most of us have a short fuse, and we're going around ready to explode. Long-suffering—you may have a disease; you may have a sickness; you may have a malady.

I remember one of our founder as a matter-of-fact, the woman who called and said, 'Would you come up and have a Bible study with us,' Esther Greisinger. She had diabetes, could hardly see, it got worse and worse, the tendons in her groin in her right leg would pull up and lock up, and she was in tremendous pain all the time. She gradually went blind, had to walk with a cane, gradually ended up in a wheelchair just suffering excruciating pain. Yet, any one of the brethren who would call her, she would cheer them up, and she would give them hope. In her pain she gave them hope.

The story about how her husband was baptized is a long story, but there are going to be some things that we have to suffer. God gives you the ability to suffer long and see it through to the end.

"...kindness [gentleness], goodness..." (v 22). That's anything but what we've experienced, and that's anything but what I am as a person naturally, so it has to be a gift of God. I remember we were told, we were commanded by the administrator of Church Administration, once a year give an attack sermon. So, as a new minister I went out and my second year, I gave an attack sermon—first and last. I attacked everything under the sun, and everyone in the Church, and every sin I knew of anybody in the church. And boy, they cut a wide swath away from me. I alienated the whole congregation. It took me over a year, to win them back. That doesn't accomplish it! James says, 'The wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.' Besides why can't the brethren of God be inspired in love? Should that not be better? *Yes!*

"...goodness, faith... [Notice where faith comes in relationship to love.] ...meekness, self-control... [How are you going to overcome sin with self-control? *By first loving God!*] ...against such things there is no law. But those who *are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. If we live by *the* Spirit, we should also be walking by *the* Spirit. We should not become vain-glorious, provoking one another *and* envying one another" (vs 22-26). If we *walk* in the Spirit, let us *live* in the Spirit, and **the fruit of the Spirit is from God!**

Let's understand something about the Church; how God deals with us. Sometimes we overlook the obvious. The Church of God is not likened to a tree; a tree grows up. The Church of God is likened to a vine, **which spreads out.** Isn't that something? That very simple instruction ought

to tell us that a hierarchy is wrong. I've got a sermon coming, *Invisible Idol/Visible Man*. You're going to understand what happened.

Jesus said, John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman.... [He's the one doing the works. Who is it that is in us doing the works? *Christ, and the Father*—correct? *Yes!*] ...He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit... [Are we seeing that happen? *Yes!*] ...but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit" (vs 1-2). That's what God wants: more love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, kindness, long-suffering and temperance.

Verse 3: "You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.... [Christ is constantly cleansing us] ...Dwell in Me... [this is all part of the Passover] ...and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can* you *bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me.... [here's the only hierarchy]: ...I am the vine, *and you are* the branches..." (vs 3-5).

I'll have to confess to you, brethren, that in 13 years I've not had to exercise one bit of authority—and I don't intend to—because if we're all submitting to the authority and the love of Christ, is that not a greater authority? Then when we come together to do what we need to do, can we not do it in peace, and orderliness, and understanding? *Yes!*

As I mentioned at the Feast, and some people came up afterwards and said, 'Never heard words like that.' I said, 'Why don't we just trust the brethren? *God does!*' Cannot the brethren be trusted? *Oh they can't be trusted, they're not going to be in the Kingdom of God.*

John Morgan down in Australia checked out 140 churches. Down in Australia you're so far away that you're going to spend the time getting the true facts—right? *He checked out 140 churches!* He's now our office manager, small as it is, down in Australia. When I talked to him on the phone about setting up the office and everything, I said, 'Look, you just send a report quarterly and let me know what's happening. If you can't be trusted with the money and funds, you won't be in the Kingdom of God so we don't need to worry about that, just take care of it.' Never have the Australians been trusted to do that, in all the years of their experience. I don't need what they have; let them use it down there. Keep it simple. The vine, that's what it needs to be. Let the fruit come forth.

"...The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are

burned. If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you." (vs 5-7).

That's what it has to be, right here: *it's living in you*. Christ is called what? '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*' If you have the Word of Christ in you, and Christ in you and the Father in you, what are you going to think on? What are you going to concentrate on? What are your thoughts going to be on?

"...you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you" (v 7). God will answer prayers. That's what the answer to unanswered prayers is, right here. There'll be time you will pray, maybe it will be years before God answers that prayer. You ever had that happen? *Yes!* Did God answer it? *Yes!* When? *At the best time!*

Verse 8: "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me... [here we're getting down into the kind of love that we need to have] ...I also have loved you..." (vs 8-9). Did He not give His life for us? *Yes, indeed!* {see sermon: *The Three Covenants of Abraham*.} Profound what He did for us.

"...I also have loved you; live in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and live in His love.... [everything that He did was pleasing to the Father] ...These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you" (vs 9-12). It's the Father and Christ in you *expressing His love*—as if He were here—to each other.

When you give someone a handshake, it's Christ *in* you and the Father expressing that love. You give someone a hug, it is because Christ *in* you and the Father is hugging you. You think on that and you try that with your fellowship and you're going to see a *vast* transformation—right? *Yes!*

Remember the first time we had someone from back east come out to keep our Feast with us, the Feast of Tabernacles in Twain-Harte. It was just a small group, we were only twelve at that time. Here come ten people from Michigan with the children and everything. They're just kind of looking at us. I think this was about 1988, somewhere around there. Here comes our little congregation of twelve, we're hugging each other and all this sort of thing and so one of the men was standing there and he asked a woman, 'When was the last time you saw him.' *Oh last Sabbath*. He was

amazed because it was like long-lost friends just seen for the first time. That's how it is, and I think that Last Great Day at Gulf Shores God blessed us phenomenally. That's the way the Feast should be. It's an outpouring of God's Spirit and an outpouring of God's love to us.

Verse 12: "This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this: that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you" (vs 12-14). Think on that! **Jesus Christ is your friend!** That is powerful stuff, brethren. We need to let it sink in.

Sometimes you go along and you think: has that been in the Bible all this time? *Yes, it's been there all this time!* Let's see what love can do for us. Let's see how this will change us.

1-Corinthians 13:4 (*Int*): "Love has patience..." That means not only patience, but patiently endures. Love will endure. Love never fails

"...is kind..." (v 4). That comes from the word *gracious*. That's how the behavior is going to be: gracious, kind, fitting and nice.

"...love is not envious..." (v 4). Not jealous. If someone receives a blessing, rejoice with them. You will receive a blessing, sure it's not envious.

"...not is vain-glorious..." (v 4). How many times has the ministry been run that way?

"...is not puffed up..." (v 4). The greatest this and that and the other thing. Isn't it interesting, puffed up? What is all of this self-help stuff? It's just the foolishness of pumping your own mind up into thinking you're something great. *Not so!*

"...is not puffed up, acts not unseemly..." (vs 4-5). It uses discretion, good conversation.

"...seeks not the things of its own..." (vs 4-5). And we might put in there for a minister, does not have a hidden agenda. *No!*

"...is not easily provoked, reckons not evil" (vs 4-5). Doesn't sit there and keep a scorecard, a scoreboard. 'Ah ha! He did this. Ah ha! He did that. Ah ha! He did the other thing.'

What is this telling us? This is telling us that the relationship that God wants us to grow in this love, is that the love between God, which is unconditional on His part, becomes unconditional on our part back to Him, and out to others especially in the family in the brethren.

You can solve a lot of problems in your marriage if you get rid of the scorecard. And regardless good, bad, or ugly however the situation is, you've got to know that you're loved. Then

there's hope. And when you know that, what is that going to do in the first place? *That's going to solve a lot of problems from coming up*—right? *Yes, it will!* That's what God wants you to know, *that He loves you under all circumstances!*

"Rejoices not at unrighteousness, but rejoices with the Truth... [that's what it has to be] ...all things covers... (vs 6-7). That means that it is able to, with the Truth and with the love, to cover whatever difficulty may come along. That's what we need to do *with the brethren*. We need to reach out to them, every one of us, with the love of God and help them cover their sins and their sorrows with the love of God. That's why if someone has left God temporarily because of men, and they come back to God and we have a part in that, we **welcome** them with open arms, and we welcome them and say, '**God loves you.**' That's what they need.

They don't need this: 'Well, I haven't seen you in church for a long time. Where have you been?' You won't see them in church again for a long time—is that not right? *Yes!* That takes a lot of love on our part—does it not? Do they know they've sinned? *Yes!* Are they ashamed that they have sinned? *Yes!* Have they confessed to God that they have? *Well they're probably in the process of doing so!* Do they need love, joy and peace? *Yes!* Read the story of the prodigal son.

Verse 7: "All things covers, all things believes... [not lies, that's of the Truth] ...all things hopes... [because love really then gives you the true hope.] ...all things endures... [whatever it is.] ...Love never fails... [Never, never, never fails!] ...but whether prophecies, they shall be done away..." (vs 7-8).

Not the prophecies of God. The heaven and earth is based on the prophecies and the Word of God. This does not mean any of the prophecies of God, this means all the stupid prophecies *we*, in our puffed up vanity, used to say would happen. Can I recall a couple of dates: 1972, 1975, etc, etc.

"...whether [there be] tongues, they shall cease..." (v 8). It's going to be something, what are we going to speak when we are the sons and daughters of God and we talk to God? I guarantee you it's not going to be English, and I guarantee you it's not going to be Hebrew. Hebrew is just as pagan as any other language is pagan. So, this whole thing that Hebrew is a pure language is nonsense. It's going to be done away.

"...they shall cease; whether [there be] knowledge it shall be done away. For in part we know, and in part we prophesy..." (vs 8-9). Let's be honest like Paul, we don't know everything in the world, we don't understand all prophecies. We're

going to talk a little bit about some prophecies. But it's going to be in part.

"...but when may come that which is perfect, then that in part shall be done away. When I was an infant [or a child], as an infant I spoke, as an infant I thought, as an infant I reasoned..." (vs 10-11). Brethren, Christ wants us to grow up, put away those childish things because all of those are the enemies of love.

We grow up and I tell you what, by the time we're teenagers we think were big, and strong, and tough, or beautiful, and all this sort of thing. Then when we're 20 we are ready to conqueror the world, and we're motivated by 'eros.' A little later in life we understand there's more to it. Then God begins to call us, so we need to put away all those childish things because those are the enemies of love, whatever it maybe. Maybe we've never grown up knowing the love of God at all, and maybe we want to be loved but every time someone tries to express that love we kind of put up this barrier, because we're afraid.

Let God's Spirit help you overcome that so you understand the love of God. Sometimes that's even within a marriage; sometimes people can live their whole lives in a married life and never really know the love of God. That's a shame, but sometimes it is, that's why there's the second resurrection, God is going to take care of all of those things.

Verse 12: "For we see now through a glass obscurely [darkly], but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall be know according as also I have been known. And now abides faith, [and] hope, [and] love; these three things; but the greater [or greatest] of these [is] love" (vs 12-13).

Let's just understand how great, how tremendous and how fantastic that the love of God is, and what it is to do for us. That's why I sometimes begin, and sometimes end, a lot of sermons here in Ephesians 3:16. This is what Paul, when he was in prison, wrote to the brethren so that they would know:

Ephesians 3:16: "That He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man... [inner person] ...that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; *and* that being rooted and grounded in love..." (vs 16-18). That's what we need to be rooted and grounded in. Not in an organization, not in a corporation, not in a man, but in the love of God.

"...you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints... [This is what God wants to give

us. This is fantastic, this is mind expanding, this is the whole goal of life.] ...may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, **and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses human knowledge...**" (vs 18-19)

There is nothing in this world that is going to be any greater than your coming to know and understand the love of Christ. That's something! Nothing greater at all.

"...which surpasses *human* knowledge; so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (v 19). That is a **profound** statement! What is it going to be like to be filled with the fullness of God? That's what the love of God will produce.

In case that you doubt that it will happen, he says, v 20: "Now to Him Who is able [that means has the power and capacity] to do exceeding abundantly..." While I'm talking about this I want you to think of your greatest thought that God is going to do to you, or to give you, or to provide for you. You're going to have to multiply that over, and over again.

"...exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us" (v 20). That's what the love of God is to do. That's why it is so important, brethren. We're going to be hearing a lot of this. I'm learning as I'm going, brethren, I'm learning. By nature I am not a loving person. And just like with the Apostle John, he and his brother James were called *the sons of thunder*, and he didn't write about love until later in his life—did he? It doesn't tell us all what he went through and what he suffered, but he learned the love of God—didn't he? *Yes, he did!* So can we! I'm learning as we go along. The Apostle Paul wrote, 'You, then, who teach another, don't you also teach yourself?' (Rom. 2:21).

That's great that we can do it. Just think how fantastic that the Word of God is that He would put in here and then add His Spirit so we can understand His love. That's why love never fails, and love is the greatest thing of all.

All Scripture from *The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred. R. Coulter (except where noted)

Scripture References:

- 1) Matthew 24:11-12
- 2) 2 Peter 3:3-6
- 3) 2 Timothy 3:1-5
- 4) Luke 11:42
- 5) 1 John 4:8-9, 8, 10-21
- 6) 1 Corinthians 13:8, 13
- 7) 1 Corinthians 12:31
- 8) 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- 9) Galatians 5:22
- 10) Revelation 3:14-19
- 11) Galatians 5:22-26
- 12) John 15:1-14
- 13) 1 Corinthians 13:4-13
- 14) Ephesians 3:16-20

Scriptures referenced, but not quoted:

- John 3:16
- 1 Corinthians 15
- Romans 2:21

Also referenced: Sermons:

- *Invisible Idol/Visible Man*
- *The Three Covenants of Abraham*

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