

"The Bond of Perfectness"

Brother G V Growcott

We, being many, are one body, - in Christ, and everyone, members of another." Rom. 12:5

For an acceptable walk in the Truth and for ecclesial health and harmony, and a state of true, mutual, spiritual joyfulness, to which we as sons and daughters of God are freely invited, it is necessary that the Spirit teachings on the subject of 'love' be continually and repeatedly presented before the mind. Paul tells us that love is the bond of perfectness; the bond - the binding together - the uniting - the unifying power of perfection. Unity of perfection - perfect oneness - based upon the only possible foundation for a perfect oneness and enthusiastic mutual striving toward perfection. Any aim short of perfection is not unifying, but dividing and breaking up. No group can have true unity unless it is whole-heartedly dedicated to the pursuit of divine perfection. Love is the bond of perfectness! Unless we as a body mutually possess this bond together, we might just as well go our separate ways - "one to his farm and another to his merchandise," because we will never - never have true ecclesial unity without it.

Let us face this basic fact of ecclesial life. If we are not prepared as a whole body to love each other with a pure heart fervently, then our assembly together is utterly meaningless. We are just another poor little lost group - among millions of others. The body of Christ is not a limited association - merely for form and convenience. It is one, intimate, closely knit, interdependent unity. By one spirit are we all baptized into one body. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."

God has tempered the whole body together that the members may have the same care one for another. The Scriptures are very specific about what love is. What are the evidences of its presence or absence among us. This is no indefinite thing. It can be very easily checked. And it is a terribly sad fact that many accept the Truth and spend their whole lives in it (often very actively), without ever perceiving this basic first principle of godliness.

It is always more profitable, whenever possible, to allow our train of thought and meditation to be shaped and guided by some specific portion of scripture. For there is never any better or more powerful, or effective way of presenting a subject than the way God presents it in His Holy Words. The principle of 'love' is very prominent all through the Scriptures, as Jesus points out and as the Jews failed to realize. The two great commandments of their law concerned love. And further more he told them that love is the fulfilling of that whole law, that all their law was built upon these commandments concerning love. Love is the declared basis of all God's dealings with Israel.

When we think of a specific portion of Scripture relating to love we naturally turn to the 1st. Epistle of John. John's words throughout are beautiful and sublime. If we could continually live in their atmosphere, it would cleanse us of all fleshliness or earthiness. John's first view of the word love in that epistle emphasizes the Truth. It is essential to make clear at the outset that love in the true Scriptural sense is not a flabby, shapeless, foggy, sentimentalism, but a clear, precise, careful adherence to specific divine instructions, based upon a pure zeal and affection for God. Love isn't something contrary to law and commands, but rather that which gives all divine law it's power and purpose and meaning.

Beginning then with John on this subject in 1st. John 2:4-5, the first mention of love, "He that saith, I know him and keepeth not His commands is a liar."

We shall find that John uses very strong language, because the issues at stake are vital. "But whoso keepeth His words, in him verily is the love of God perfected."

In verses 7-9 of this 24th chapter, he speaks of the new commandment which was not a new commandment, but which was the same from the beginning. Jesus had said, speaking to his disciples on his last evening before the crucifixion;- "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you," He said; - "That ye also love one another." By this," he continues, by this manifestation that all men might know that ye are my disciples. This is if

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we have love one to another. Are we Jesus' disciples? Do we measure up to this test that John gives. He said that it could be determined whether we now have love toward one another. The special spiritual love that he describes, "Brotherly love", was an old commandment, in that pointed out regarding the law, and was the heart and root of all commandments. It was a new commandment, in that it was the foundation of that new man - the new birth - the new and living way - a new creation - a new name - the new covenant - the new Jerusalem - the new heaven and the new earth. It was new in the depth and

beauty. Such Jesus' own example gave us;- "As I have loved you, greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Before John goes further into the subject of love he speaks of what must not be love in verses 15 thru 17 of this 2nd chapter of the 1st epistle of John;-

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." There is no room for both, and John makes that vitally clear right at the beginning - no room for both - these are serious words - we do well to ponder them deeply and honestly test ourselves by them. We all desire eternal life. We all recognize the great desirability of God's love and favor and the blessings and acceptance. Let us then have the wisdom to face and accept this clear instruction of the way of life. Surely it is very small and unworthy to want to have it both ways. What are the things of the world we cannot love if we truly love God - if we truly understand what the love of God means? They are its honors, associations, pleasures, and amusements - all the interests of the world are pressing in on us during all of our waking hours, seeking our love and attention and interest. It takes a deep and strong comprehension of the love of God to withstand and hold firm.

John continues - "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away." That is the saddest part of it all. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Here then is the choice - John is about to tell us of the lifegiving joys and glory of divine love, and he must first clear the ground. He must make the issue crystal clear. He must leave no misunderstanding about the fact that we must put away all interest, desire and affection for things of the world, if we want to be part of that glorious company that are united in the unspeakable joy of the love of God.

Beginning chapter 3 John says,- "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What greater condescension could God have made - what greater honor - what greater incentive - that we should be called the sons of God. It is fitting that he should begin there for as he tells us, the love of God for man is the root and well-spring of all our love for God and for each other. It is the motive and source behind all love. God's love for man, so supremely manifested in His only begotten son is the transforming power of all holiness and righteousness. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20). That was the power behind it all. The love of Christ constraineth us. We love, because He first loved us.

Beginning with chapter 3 and arising from the thoughts of the marvelous manifestation of God's love in calling us as weak erring mortals to be His children in glory, the apostle stresses how this hope and the promise must lead us to holiness. How out of place and out of harmony any worldliness or ungodliness is with this divine relationship. Verse 10 of the 3rd chapter of John says;- "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

"Neither he that loveth not his brother." Any ill feeling to any of our brethren and sisters cuts us off - cuts us off from relationship to God. In this are the children of God manifested. "For this", John continues, "is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one

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another." We notice that he divides all mankind into two relationships. The children of God and the children of the devil. This is a very sobering thought. If we are not one, we are the other. There are no neutrals. We are either of the seed of the woman (that is of Christ, - in harmony with the mind of Christ), or we are of the seed of the serpent (that is fleshly-minded).

John gives us two identifications of the children of God for our own self examination. First, doing righteousness and second, loving our brother. Let us strive to fully realize the prominent and vital place that this matter of loving our brethren is given in the commands of God. It is not something that is just desirable, but a thing that is repeatedly presented as vital - essential. We find that John returns to this point again and again.

Let us closely follow his thoughts here as he continues in verse 14:- "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Here is the simple, yet deeply searching test - that we

should each apply to ourselves, to see if we really have passed from death unto life; to see if we really are in the faith. Do we find ourselves powerfully moved and motivated by love, kindness, concern, gentleness, sympathy, patience, a desire to render comfort and service to our brethren? All our brethren - not just the limited few, who happen to please us or appeal to us, but to all of our brethren. Especially to those who seem the least lovable. For these are the ones who are most in need of love, and guidance, patience, brotherly kindness.

If this test is not done honestly and fearlessly, (and we can tell whether it is or not), then we must face the implications of John's searching words:-"We have not passed from death unto life." We are not in Christ. We are not in the faith. We have not properly learned the Gospel. We have not entered the Divine family, we are still children of the devil. For John continues with this searching point in the 13th. verse:-"He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." He says in ver. 16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:"

He is beginning to show us what this love really means, the depth and significance of it. Another version puts it: "By this we know love" - from this we learn what love is, "that He laid down His life for us." That is the kind of thing John is talking about. When the Scriptures speak of love, they do not mean some puny little part time hobby. Love, in the Scriptural sense, is a tremendous, all-consuming passion for goodness and service to others. If we haven't got it, we are not the children of God. John goes on:- "And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Not just be willing to face death for them in some unlikely dire emergency, but to give our whole present lives for them right here and now.

The next verse (ver 17), should be imperishably engraved upon our hearts, - for it carries the seed of a deeper, broader, more world shaking revolution than this planet has ever seen. "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? " It is for each alone to search his heart, and as standing in the presence of God, to decide just how much that statement means to him. Remembering that it is impossible to obey this too much, but very easy to obey it too little. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need how dwelleth the love of God in him? " Let us remember that the Scriptures are not speaking of little conscience salving token handouts, but on the large scale of the love of Jesus. "Love one another, as I have loved you."

Are we big enough to be the children of God? We repeat, are we big enough to be the children of God? Or are these teachings too vast and noble for our petty, selfish, earthy natures to rise to?

John presses the point still further in verse 18:- "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." So much talk about love, but where shall we find that life-giving, self-sacrificing love of which John speaks as essential to salvation. Is it the

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rule among us? Are we the children of God? Or is our love that of words and tongue - such kind words of sympathy as James points out - "depart in peace - be ye warmed and filled - we are so sorry - so sympathetic to hear of your trouble and we hope that everything will be all right, and we will come back again and see you soon."

What a noble feeling it gives us to be so kind and sympathetic in tongue and in word. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. There is a terrible reckoning in store on the matter of unfaithful stewardship. It would be profitable at this point to give some thought to just what the Scriptures mean by love - some of the details - and for that the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians is the most informative. Paul tells us there in detail, just how true love acts. For by comparing ourselves (and the emphasis is upon ourselves), by comparing ourselves with what he says, we can easily determine whether or not we are really children of God and on the way to life. After telling us, with the strongest possible emphasis, that no other service or sacrifice is of any value in the absence of this Scripture love, the apostle says in beginning to describe it:- "Love is longsuffering."

"Longsuffering means:" long and patient endurance of offense - long continued gentleness in the face of provocation. Why? Because love desires only good; works continually for good. Love is saddened by the failures of others who manifest goodness. But it has the divine wisdom to realize that only by infinite patience can good be accomplished. Good is worked out very slowly. And yielding to impatience is failure and defeat. The word "longsuffering" carries the sense of a tremendous power of self-restraint and self-control, more powerful than natural passions of anger and impatience. Love is first and foremost "longsuffering." When we find ourselves becoming angry or impatient, or irritated, or annoyed, that is the

danger signal; the time to stop and examine our hearts to seek the help of God to overcome where we are slipping. It is a sign that the diabolos is forging another link in the chain of bondage to sin and death and only the power of God can break that fatal chain.

Paul continues:- "Love is kind." "Kind" means having a continued disposition to do good, confer happiness, and to avoid anything that creates offense or unhappiness. Kind is the opposite of harsh, stern, unfeeling, or selfish. No one who is kind in the Scripture sense, can be any of these things. Kindness often has to be very, very straight forward and firm. It is never harsh, never bitter, never rough or rude. And no one who manifests these opposites of kindness is kind according to the divine definition, regardless of what zeal they have. They do not, therefore, have the love, without which, Paul says, all else is useless. These two characteristics then are the two main pillars of Scriptural love - longsuffering and kindness. Within that framework most problems can be solved; "longsuffering" and "kindness" - not just as strained surface effort, and on certain occasions, but consistently manifested in all circumstances as the deepest and strongest motive of life. Let us take a moment to stand alongside the Scriptural standards and see what our actual stature is.

The Apostle continues:- "Love envieth not." Love desires nothing that others have, but is completely satisfied and content with the infinite riches of the glory of God, the glory and the grace of God. Knowing that if a man truly has that - he has everything for all eternity, and there is nothing more to be desired, nothing anyone can give him.

"Love vaunteth not itself." It does not vote, or seek attention or notice. It does not seek self-gratification to the manifestation of its abilities, or knowledge, or accomplishments. It keeps self carefully in the background. With divine wisdom it sees through the pitiful childishness of seeking to impress others, which is at the root of a large proportion of all human conduct - trying to create an appearance - to impress others.

"Love is not puffed up." It is free, not only from outward show, but also from inward pride, a much more subtle evil. To be pleased and satisfied with ourselves is the most disastrous form of

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self deception. For love knows that all mankind is weak, and ignorant, and helpless, and all good is solely of the grace of God. Jesus said:- "Why callest thou me good - learn of me for I am meek and lowly - for I can of mine own self do nothing." If that is the mind of Christ, what room is there for any self-approval in the sin-stricken sons of men? The love of which Paul speaks as vital to salvation is no small or common thing.

He continues:- "Love doth not behave itself unseemly." No excuse, no excuses for outbursts of temper or passion. Love does not act out of harmony with the holiness of its relation to God, does not speak foolishly or according to the sudden impulses of the flesh. Love is always gentle and gracious, and courteous, and well behaved. There is nothing silly, or changeable, or erratic, or course, or rude.

"Love seeketh not her own." Her own what? Her own anything, her own way, her own desires, her own right, her own advantages, her own comfort, her own honor. Her love just does not seek at all, but gives. Love's greatest secret is the knowledge that all true worth-while pleasure is in giving and not seeking. There is no real satisfaction in seeking and accumulating whatever it may be, but only disappointment and frustration in the end. But giving, whether it be goods, or labor, or time, or any of the foregoing, or yielding of any advantage - we say, giving, is deeply satisfying and rewarding and uplifting, and ennobling. It is getting closer to God and that always yields pleasure and blessing and satisfaction.

"Love is not easily provoked." In selecting of this word 'easily' by the translators, who apparently could not rise to the conception, is utterly unwarranted. It is not in any way in the original or supported by the original. For it takes all the power out of the expression and all other versions correct this. The true translation is as the revised version has it:"Love is not provoked." When we say, "I am provoked." or "that is provoking." we are actually saying, (if we will stop to translate the terms), "I do not love. I am permitting the flesh to rule, and not the Spirit. I am not big enough to be on God's side." If we examine ourselves by the light of God's Spirit Word we shall find very, very often, that in our fleshly self-assertion we are declaring our own condemnation and glorying in our shame. Let us think of this before we blurt out our feelings of which we are so proud. David, in Psalm 119, takes this same searching truth that love is not provoked, and therefore if we are provoked, we have not found the power of love, without which all

else is hopeless. He says: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Psa. 119:165.

"Love thinketh no evil." The revised version gives the meaning a little more clearly:- "Love taketh no account of evil." That is, overlooks it. Does not impute it. Bears no resentment. Literally it is:- "Love reckoneth not the evil," Passes it by, makes loving allowance. Love shall cover a multitude of sins. No ecclesia can be a true joyous ecclesia of God where this loving passing over of evil is not practiced. It does not mean condoning of evil - never that. The Scriptures are very clear on that point. The truth must be defended, both in doctrine and in precept. But the reference here is to personal reaction through personal injury. The attitude that love takes toward the offenders. "Father. forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Chapter 5, of the epistle of John, to which we shall return, expresses a very important principle in this respect. One of which we do not fully realize the importance and the power. He shows us the proper way to handle evil. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death," Therefore, when others injure us or we see them doing things that grieve us as not in harmony with the truth, we have a great responsibility on their behalf, for their salvation may rest in our hands, in the power of prayer. This is how love, instead of spreading a matter or taking offense, or causing agitation, or trouble, may cover a multitude of sins and save a sinner from the error of his ways. Not "in" the error of his ways, but "from" the error of his ways. For nothing can stand before the invincible power of righteous prayer.

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"Love rejoiceth not in iniquity." Love enjoys no gossip, gets no satisfaction out of trouble or suffering of others, even when it is well deserved. Love can have no part in unfairness, or injustice, or discrimination of any kind; it gets no enjoyment from anything unclean or unrighteous, or unholy.

"But rejoiceth with the truth." All love's allegiance, and pleasure, and rejoicing are on the side of the Truth. "Rejoices with the truth." Here is something very important. In all our emphasis upon love, we must never forget that it must always be grounded on and in the Truth. Love is the power of life. The Truth and Truth alone must be its form and faith. All these beautiful qualities of love exercised outside the Divine framework of Truth, lose all their beauty and divinity and power and become mere things of the flesh. Divine love is always rejoicing in, within the Truth and never wanders outside of it. Nothing masquerading under the guise of love is in harmony with true love, such is only a deceptive counterfeit.

"Love beareth all things." The word for "beareth" means to contain - to hold in - to be watertight. Love is strong enough to hold in and contain all other emotions and desires. And love is the only power that can. Apart from this power, which arises, as John says, from prolonged contemplation upon the love that God has freely manifested on man. Apart from this power, the control of the flesh, according to the will of God, is hopeless. But love can contain and restrain all things. And the word means to keep out as well as to keep in. Love is an impervious seal and protection against all destructive, misleading or contaminating influences from without.

"Love believeth all things." What are the "all things" that love believes? And is it particularly a virtue to believe all things? Love's infinite capacity for belief of ultimate good is one of its greatest duties; belief in God and belief in the capabilities and possibilities of man, with the help of God. James says"- "The wisdom from above is easy to be entreated or literally, "easily persuaded."- nothing vacillating, but easily persuaded on the basis of love. It takes a tremendous power of belief to truly forgive seventy times seven and to wholeheartedly mean it. There is nothing cynical or pessimistic or sour about love. It is always willing to believe the best and to give the benefit of every doubt. To the wisdom of the world this is gullibility or stupidity, but love will be found in the end to have been the wiser way when all the wise of the world are exposed in the pitiful nakedness of their foolishness.

"Love hopeth all things." Love comprehends all hope, as it does all belief, or faith. Love never gets discouraged, never gives up hope, regardless of circumstances or appearances. It is clear from the general trend and direction of the apostle's remarks that the hope he has in mind is hope for, and in regard to others. He is speaking of love as a relationship - as a way of conduct and attitude toward others. Love never gives up trying and hoping - is never soured or embittered by failure or rebuff.

"Love endureth all things." The word means to stand firm, to be unshaken and unmoved in the face of difficulty, attack or hardship.

Finally - "Love never faileth." It never wears out, never dies, never comes to an end. The apostle points out that this is the only human attribute that carries over into eternity. If we have this, we shall endure. Lacking this, we pass away with the perishing world.

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We turn again to John's epistle, and read again the words at which we left it, (1 John 3:18) - "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And he continues - "And hereby - by this - we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." - that is, IF we are living and rejoicing in this divine love which the apostle has so beautifully described. John goes on - "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Do our hearts condemn us as we measure ourselves by this one and only way of life?

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Verse 23 - "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." Nearly twenty times in this epistle this same commandment is emphasized - that we MUST love one another. It is the key and theme of the whole epistle.

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AFTER warning against false teachers in the early part of Ch. 4, he returns to the same theme in Ver. 7 - "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God: and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." When we consider all that is involved in the love of which he speaks, we can well realize that we must be born of God to be able to manifest it, and that to achieve this love is truly to know God. And it further follows, (ver. 8) - "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." Now Jesus said that to know God is life eternal, so the implication is clear that the achievement of this love of which Paul speaks is a necessary step to obtain eternal life.

"GOD IS LOVE." Here he reaches the heart of his subject. God is not just loving, but He is LOVE ITSELF - that is His essential nature and personality. As we shape ourselves to this divine ideal of love, we make ourselves one with God - we conform ourselves to, and lay hold on, eternity.

Ver. 10 - "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Love does not originate with us. It was not in return for our love that God sent His Son. All the love originated with Him, while we were yet loveless sinners. He did not wait till we were lovable before He put His redeeming love into action on our behalf. Nor does He withdraw the offer and manifestation of His love because we continually fail and disappoint Him in our reciprocation of it. This gives force to the exhortation that follows (ver.11) - "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Love is needed most where it is at first deserved and appreciated least. God set His infinite love in motion toward the ungodly in order to create and kindle love in them. If, then, we are to follow God's example and be God's children we can never justify not loving by the fact that the recipient is not lovable, for that is all the more reason for giving him our love.

Ver. 12 - "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." Here is a powerful promise and incentive indeed! We cannot see God. He is unapproachable. But if we love one another, God dwells in us. He will draw near. He will make His comfort and His presence felt. He will work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, and He will perfect His love in us, so that we are one with Him. Again the apostle repeats the glorious revelation and promise (ver. 16) - "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Love is the meeting place, the sphere of communion and communication.

Ver. 17 - "Herein" - (that is, in this way, through this divine bond) - "is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness - (that is - confidence, assurance, freedom from fear) - "in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world." Are we, by this oneness of love, as He is in this world?- for that alone can be the ground of confidence. He has shown us clearly what HE is - God is LOVE - infinite love - an endless, inexhaustible fountain of love, seeking to bring blessing wherever it flows.

Ver. 18 - "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." "Perfect love casteth out fear." Surely this is the deepest and most beautiful statement in all Scripture! The world lives in fear. Its whole framework is based on mutual fear.

It has always been so, but especially today. The special mark of the last days is - "All men's hearts failing for fear."

There exist today the two greatest human powers the world has ever seen, and they live in mortal fear of each other. But fear goes deeper than international problems. Fear is at the root

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of all human life, and much of man's effort and contrivance is motivated by it. Fear is a terrible, destroying thing. It is a weakness of the flesh that robs us of so much comfort and joy.

How often the Scriptures remind us that all is in the all-powerful hand of God, and exhort us to "Fear Not!" "Fear not Abram." "Hagar, fear Not!" "Moses said unto the people, Fear Not!" (Exo. 20:20). "Fear Not, neither be discouraged" (Deut. 1:21). "God will not fail thee; Fear Not, neither be dismayed" (Deut. 31:8). And so the endless chain of divine assurance could be extended throughout the Scriptures. Twelve times we find these words in Isaiah alone, as in 43:5 - "Fear Not, for I am with thee!"

The Psalms express the confidence of the godly man - "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (23:4). "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed" (46:1-2). And so throughout the New Testament also: "Fear Not, Joseph," "Fear Not, Mary," "Fear Not Simon." Fear Not Paul." And the first words of the Son of Man similitude to John were (Rev. 1:17). "Fear Not."

The Scriptures go right to the heart of the problem in declaring that the sacrifice of Jesus was to - "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," - the bondage and sorrow in which the whole creation groans. Sin and death are the root of all fear. But - "Perfect love casteth out fear. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." This is love's greatest beauty and blessing. Only God can bestow this glorious freedom from all fear, and He will bestow it upon those, and those alone, who dedicate their lives to love of Him and of their brethren.

Ver.19 - "We love, because he first loved us." All love must grow from the ever expanding realization of the glory of the infinite love of God - God's desire to draw near and to bestow good.

Ver.20 - "If a man say, I love God: and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" What is the point? Why cannot we love God if we do not love men? When we understand this, we understand the nature of true spiritual love. That love does not go out in limited beams, there is nothing limited about it - it is a universal irradiation. It is not a limited attribute - it must be the whole fibre of our character. If our love is not shining upon and blessing all who are close to us - all with whom we come in contact, how do we expect it to be real and strong enough to reach God?" Furthermore, we have no direct contact with God. We can only manifest our professed love for Him by obedience to Him in relation to things that are close to us.

Ver.21 - "And this is the commandment we have from Him, that He who loveth God, love his brother also." By this, then, we shall stand or fall in the great day of judgment - by the extent to which we comprehend and manifest the beauty of divine love toward all, in all our daily relationships, and especially our ecclesial relationships. If we are too small and selfish and touchy and self-centered-centered to love all our brethren according to the divine pattern, we are of no use in the great, eternal purpose of God. For God is love.

- GVG - August 1963 -

1 John 3:1 (KJV) : therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1 John 3:2 (KJV) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:3 (KJV) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

1 John 3:4 (KJV) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

1 John 3:5 (KJV) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

1 John 3:6 (KJV) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

1 John 3:7 (KJV) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

1 John 3:8 (KJV) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:9 (KJV) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 3:10 (KJV)

1 John 3:11 (KJV) For this

1 John 3:12 (KJV) Not as Cain, {who} was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

1 John 3:13 (KJV) Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

1 John 3:14 (KJV)

1 John 3:15 (KJV) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 3:16 (KJV)

1 John 3:17 (KJV)

1 John 3:18 (KJV)

1 John 3:19 (KJV) And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

1 John 3:20 (KJV) For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

1 John 3:21 (KJV) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, {then} have we confidence toward God.

1 John 3:22 (KJV) And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1 John 3:23 (KJV) And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

1 John 3:24 (KJV) And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.