



A Spiritual Encouragement Message April 9, 2021

The Power of Love

by Derrick Victor

In his book *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Eric Butterworth, tells of a college sociology class that was sent into the Baltimore slums to take case histories of 200 young boys. The students were required to write an evaluation of each boy's projected future, and in virtually every case, they wrote, "He hasn't got a chance."

Some twenty-five years later, another professor came across the earlier study and decided to do a follow-up study. With the exception of twenty boys who had died or moved, the study revealed that 176 of the remaining 180 boys had gone on to surprising success, with many becoming lawyers, doctors, and leading businessmen.

When the men were asked for the reasons that contributed to their successes, they all pointed to one particular teacher who had influenced them. The teacher was still alive, so the professor went to visit her to ask how she had influenced boys seemingly destined for poverty and crime to become such success stories. "It's really very simple," she responded. "I loved those boys."

And it really is THAT simple. Love is a powerful force for Good that God has given us. He has demonstrated to us what love is and what it can do. He has allowed us to know Him and express His love for others. And truly, He's commanded us to LOVE our neighbors (not just those who live on our street) as ourselves. So, I wish to share with you **The Power of Love**.

LOVE HAS THE POWER TO...

Conquer:

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Rom. 12:19-21)

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Rom. 8:37).

Jesus Christ conquered sin in our lives with His great act of love and sacrifice. We too can conquer sin around us through the same means. It is not easy, and it often hurts, but love is not given because it feels

great, rather, to conquer! Invasion often comes with casualty, so invading sin with the power of love will bring pain as well. Just remember, we win...

Draw:

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32)

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:44-45).

The concept of love operating as a magnetic force to draw things in is nothing new or surprising. In fact, we have heard the old adage, **"you catch more flies with honey than vinegar"** to tell us how make friends and have better relationships.

Yet, when it comes to God, I can forget this all too often. God sent His Son to this earth to draw us near to Him. He does not want wrath, punishment, and shame in our lives. He wants us to be close to Him in righteousness. If God draws us near to Himself, surely our love draws us near to each other...

Bind:

"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Col. 3:14).

Every real relationship is bound by ONE determining factor: LOVE. A marriage can only remain when two people determine to love each other. A parent can only raise their children well when they truly love them as much as they do themselves. And every friendship that we cherish is based on the value of love that we have for the other person. Likewise, the church of God can only bind itself together properly when it does so with LOVE. Anything else is not correct. It's like trying to fit a round peg in a square hole.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound" (Is. 61:1).

Cover Sins:

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. 4:8).

"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." (Prov. 10:12).

"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (Jam. 5:19-20).

You know why it took LOVE to cover a multitude of sins? Because perfect adherence isn't possible. We desperately try to be righteous, BECAUSE we LOVE God, but we will never be righteous enough to cover our own sins.

The OT is the perfect example of that truth. God instituted for the Jews 613 Laws of Moses by which they could be righteous, and EVEN on these Laws they could NEVER perfectly adhere to them. That was the purpose of the manifestation of God's love in His precious Son, Jesus. We needed Christ to give us the love sacrifice and take on our sins.

We have to ask ourselves, out of all the people we love in our lives, how many of them are perfect? How many of them have never hurt or offended us? NONE. In fact, the only thing holding that relationship together is LOVE. Love that accepts an apology. Love that forgives. Love that repents when wrong. AND even love that can overlook at times. It's the old phrase, "**Pick your battles**". Why do we say that? Because we know that if we didn't, we'd be fighting with people EVERY DAY. We have to decide what matters most. When do I speak and explain my hurt, and when do I overlook the offence?

Now, these principles are a starting point. Love also has the power to **Constrain** (*2 Cor. 5:14; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 John 3:16-19*), **Console** (*Rom. 8:28, 35-39; John 14:23; 2 Tim. 4:8*), and **Last** (*1 Cor. 13:8; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 John 4:8*).

Love is the most powerful tool we have! So, I suppose the question is, are we using it well?