

THROUGH NIGHT TO MORNING

by

A. C. Dixon, B.A., D.D.

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SERMON FOURTEEN -

FRIENDSHIP-LOVE

"Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (I Corinthians 12:31).

THE German proverb, "The good is enemy of the best," may have been suggested by this text, for it certainly intimates that we may lose much by being content simply with the good, when that contentment with the good satisfies us without the best. Now, the way of special gifts is good - the way of the apostleship, the way of prophecy, speaking GOD's word in GOD's power, the way of teaching, the way of miracles, of helps, the way of government, the way of tongues. These are good, but not the best.

Better than the gift is the grace beneath the gift, and we have in the 13th chapter of I Corinthians the unfolding of the queen of all graces - love. **"I show unto you a more excellent way."**

The chapter divides into three clear-cut divisions.

- The first three verses give us love in character building,
- forming the individual verses four to seven give us love in making society, forming the community,
- and from the eighth verse through the thirteenth we have love making Heaven, forming the individual and society.

- (1) Love building character;
- (2) Love building society;
- (3) Love building Heaven.

TWO KINDS OF LOVE

There are two kinds of love in the New Testament - what Dr. Trumbull calls "longing-love" and "friendship-love."

A longing-love seeks the object loved, and the ministry of that object. It is the love most common in the family. Friendship-love is independent of possession and ministry. It is the love that ministers without seeking for ministry in return. It is the love that desires to serve without the least desire for service - a love that lays itself on the altar for another, and does not even wish that the other should serve in return.

CHRIST used both of these words in His conversation with Peter. "**Lovest thou Me?**"

The first word is friendship-love. "Do you love Me so well that you don't care whether I love you or not? Do you love Me so well that you will minister without any thought of mutual ministry? Do you love Me as GOD loves?"

When Peter replied, he did not use that word. He used the weaker word - the "longing-love" word. "**Thou knowest that I love Thee** - as a man loves a man. I cannot say to Thee that I love, as GOD loves, but I love Thee with the family longing-love."

In the last question, JESUS drops down to Peter's word, and says, "Peter, do you really love Me with a longing-love, with a selfish love?" Then Peter was grieved that the Lord should intimate that he did not love Him even with a selfish love. He evidently dropped down to Peter's level that He might lift His disciple up to His own level.

In this chapter there is just one word used, and that is friendship-love. Dr. Trumbull so translates it as a love that does not seek for ministry; a love that exists without a particle of selfishness; a love that would serve GOD and go to perdition rather than not serve Him ; a love that waits upon others and does not request others to wait upon it. Now this is a height which may be far above us, and yet we will find that this kind of love really exists in human relations.

FRIENDSHIP-LOVE BUILDS CHARACTER

Let us study it now in character building. There are six things enumerated in the first three verses that are important in character building. Ecstatic joy! That is important. Speaking with tongues is not to be despised. Remember the distinction between speaking "**with other tongues**," as on the Day of Pentecost, and "**speaking with tongues**," as at Corinth?

On the day of Pentecost they spoke "**with other tongues**" and people of different languages understood them; but at Corinth in "**speaking with tongues**" nobody understood them, and they did not understand themselves. It was simply ecstatic joyful Glory!

"Hallelujah," feelings that they could not express, and hence great confusion, like noises from an instrument that could not be understood. Paul says, "When outsiders come in and hear that sort of thing, they will say that you are crazy and you will have to interpret to them what it means, or they will go off and say you are fools." And he says, "I would rather speak five words in a language that somebody can understand than ten thousand in tongues, simply ecstatic expressions that are good, to be sure, but are not profitable to others."

The speaking with tongues simply edifies the man that speaks. It is a spiritual tonic, but it does not help anybody else. It may drift into a sort of selfish spiritual enjoyment. And he says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels; though I have all the ecstasy of earth and Heaven; though I have such a joy in me that I could not express it even if I were an angel - I would be just as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal if I did not have love - the love that seeks the good of some one else."

Speaking for GOD in a language that people can understand is very useful. That is prophesying; and yet Paul says, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and have not this friendship-love, I am nothing."

Speaking for GOD will not make character without love. You can go as a messenger and speak the truth, but you will be empty of character without love. You may go further and have all knowledge and understand all mysteries, so that you will be a very intelligent prophet, and you may have the ability to speak it forth; but if you have not unselfish love, you do not make character, you are nothing.

You may have acting faith - a faith that will remove a mountain - faith as a grain of mustard seed will do that, and you may use it and move the mountain, but, if you have not unselfish love, you do not make character. Faith that moves a mountain does not make character without love.

More than that, you may be so liberal that you give all your goods to feed the poor. Some people can be liberal and yet not love anybody but themselves, and in their very liberality they satisfy selfishness, the opposite of friendship-love. They give their goods to feed the poor for the praise of the rich and the poor. They may have a motive that has not a tinge of friendship-love in it. Though you have that kind of liberality which will lead you to give everything you have to the feeding of the poor, it does not make character, "it profits you nothing."

You may have a conscientiousness that will take you to the stake. You may believe the truth so firmly that you are willing to die for it, and yet if you have not unselfish love, you will not make character.

Now it is well for us to look up to GOD and ask the question, "Have I ever had the experience of an unselfish love?" "Am I content with a faith that works, a faith that is liberal, a faith that uses knowledge, a faith that speaks for GOD, a faith that sometimes gets ecstatic and shouts? 'Hallelujah'? Am I content with a working Christianity without unselfish love?"

If so, I am not letting GOD build character as He would. When friendship-love that seeks nothing of anybody, not even of GOD, but is willing to serve without reward, gets hold of you, you will begin to be something. You will be transfigured.

FRIENDSHIP-LOVE BUILDS SOCIETY

Let us see, in the next place, how this unselfish love builds society. There are fifteen things that it does for society. It makes character for the individual; it does fifteen things for the community. **"It suffers long and is kind."**

It suffers for its object and suffers on account of its object, and yet is kind. It is possible for a selfish love to serve another and be kind, but it takes more than a selfish love to suffer on account of another and be kind. The mother can suffer for the child because she loves it and expects something to come of it, but when she begins to suffer on account of the child's wickedness and the disappointment that the child has brought, it is harder to be kind.

It is kindness that cements society, and if you do not love people well enough to be kind when

you suffer on account of them, you have not yet tasted of GOD's unselfish love. If you are kind simply because you are selfish and you want their kindness and you would like to keep in favour with them, you have not entered upon the outskirts of this friendship-love.

There is an oriental legend that tells of an Arab sheik who was very popular with his people, and the crowd followed him shouting his praises. One day in the middle of the street he stopped and picking up a stone he flung it into the crowd and struck one of them. Then they scattered with curses. He said, "A friendship that will not bear stones is no friendship at all. A friendship that will not stand up and be hit is not worth having," and he went off disgusted with the crowd. A friendship-love will stand stones, will endure suffering, will welcome criticism and be all the stronger on account of it.

"Friendship-love **envieth not.**" Envy is impossible to it. Envy is jealousy of what others have. It is a desire to possess what others have. It is wishing either that they did not have it or that you had it as well. Now, love that seeks nothing but simply the good of its object, that does not ask any return, cannot envy. That love has no hand to receive; it desires only to give.

When you get into your heart a real friendship-love for another, you will not envy that other's position. You will be willing for that friend to make you a steppingstone toward high position.

Love of this kind does not get proud. It is "**not puffed up.**" It is gentle; it is courteous. Courtesy is simply unselfishness at work. What makes gentlemen and gentlewomen is simply unselfishness. What makes us courteous is the desire to make others happy without seeking happiness for ourselves.

"**Seeketh not her own. Is not easily provoked.**" Never speaks a cross word; is so anxious not to hurt the feelings of others that it is willing to have its own feelings hurt.

"**Thinketh no evil**" That does not mean never thinks of sin, but thinketh no evil in the sense of criticism, has no eyes for imperfections. "**Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things. Believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.**"

Has that love ever appeared in human flesh? It was the kind of love that Jonathan and David had. The moment Jonathan saw David his heart became knitted to him, and though he was his rival to the throne, he did everything he could to advance his interests. There was no envy, no selfishness. Jonathan and David lived for each other.

In the case of Ruth, Orpah and Naomi, we find the two kinds of love illustrated. Orpah was told by Naomi if she went with her she could not give her anything. Orpah kissed Naomi and went home. But Ruth clung to her mother-in-law. She said, "I am willing to give myself for thee." She would rather be with her and serve her than have the service of all other people in the world. Orpah went home to take care of herself, and Ruth accompanied Naomi to take care of her. That was friendship-love.

There is an ancient story of three friends - one of them very poor and the other two very rich. The poor man, Endamidas, on his death bed made his will. He willed to one of his rich friends the care of his mother as long as she lived, and he willed to the other rich friend the care of his

daughter and her endowment with a marriage portion.

When the community heard of that will, they smiled and said, "A lunatic has died, who has willed to his friends the care of his poor relatives." But when Chasixenus heard of it, he said, "Where does that mother live?" And he went and brought her into his home and kept her in comfort until she died. When Asetheus heard of the will, he said, "Where is the daughter of my friend?" And he went and brought her to his home. His own daughter and she were married on the same day and were given the same amount of dowry. And when JESUS CHRIST commits something to us like that, we purpose to do it, not because Heaven will come to us for it, but just because we are His friends and we have experienced some of this friendship-love. Abraham was the "**friend of God**," He was willing to give himself and his son and everything he had entirely to GOD.

Humboldt was very happily married. When his wife was taken sick, the doctor said perhaps she would die, and Humboldt went off into his room to meditate and pray. He tells us that in the quiet he almost decided to commit suicide. His one thought was that she might need him on the other side. He walked the floor, speaking to himself. "She may need me." She got well, and he ministered to her, careless about her ministry to him. That is friendship-love.

FRIENDSHIP-LOVE MAKES HEAVEN. With the character building of the individual and the society building of the community, we have an intimation of what is coming by and bye in the Heaven building, which begins with the eighth verse.

"Love never fails." These other things have their mission. Prophecy will do its work. Faith. and hope abide, but the one thing that makes Heaven what it is, is friendship-love. It is the willingness to help others, not wanting to be helped. It is the desire to bless others and not craving a blessing. It is the love that lays itself upon the altar.

If you will glance through the past, you will find that the great epochs of history have been made by friendship-love like this. It was the friendship of Knox and Calvin, Luther and Melanchthon that made the Reformation possible. It was John Wesley and his friends that made the Wesleyan movement what it was. When William of Orange was sick with the smallpox, William Bentinck sat by his side and ministered, and after three or four weeks of suffering, William, Prince of Orange, said, "If my friend has had an hour's sleep, I knew it not. When I was awake, he was there. When I wanted, he ministered." When the king was dying, he asked, "Where is Bentinck?" And when Bentinck came and sat by his side the king was too weak to talk; he just took his hand and pressed it and kissed it, and laid it on his breast and went into eternity. It was the recognition of a friendship that did not ask for something, but just ministered because it loved.

Dr. George Truett of Dallas, Texas, in a sermon some time ago, said: "If a man comes to me and I see in that man the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and he asks me for my last coat, I ought to take it off and give it to him."

There was a wise man in that congregation who wrote to Dr. Truett during the week and said: "You made a foolish remark last Sunday, and I hope when you quiet down and come to your senses, you will be able to apologize for it before people who have some sense. You said if

CHRIST asked you for your last coat, you would give it to Him. GOD does not ask us to be fools."

Dr. Truett rose before the congregation the Sunday following, with that letter in his hand and said: "I am not in the habit of reading anonymous letters, but this one is an exception," and he read it through. He said, "I do want to apologize to this intelligent congregation. I said last Sunday that if JESUS asked me for my coat, I ought to give it to Him. What I wish to say now is that if JESUS should ask me, not for my coat, but for my life, I ought to give it up to Him without a moment's hesitation. He died for me, and I ought to be willing to die for Him." Oh, for a friendship-love that simply looks up and loves and does not reach out and grasp.

Dr. Truett holds summer Missions among the cowboys of the West, and in his audience one day there was a rich ranchman. The sermon was on the love of CHRIST, and the privilege of stewardship - all we have and are at the disposal of our Master. GOD gripped the heart of the rich old ranchman, gave him in a vision of CHRIST what he ought to be and what he ought to do. At the close of the service he came up to Dr. Truett and said:

"I would like to see you awhile. Let us walk out together." They walked till they came to an over-hanging rock. They sat down, and the ranchman pointed to the fields about them as he said: "I thought I owned all this property. Ten thousand cattle are grazing yonder, and I thought this morning that they were mine. Here are fifty thousand acres that I thought this morning belonged to me. I have somehow been feeling I was rich, but since GOD got hold of me this morning I have told Him that the cattle are His and the ranch is His an everything I have is His."

Friendship-love for CHRIST was beginning to bear fruit in his soul, making character, fitting him for better citizenship, and giving a foretaste of Heaven.

When we have yielded to the spell of the love which prompted the Son of GOD to die for us on the Cross, we, too, will place upon His altar all we are and have.

~ end of chapter 14
