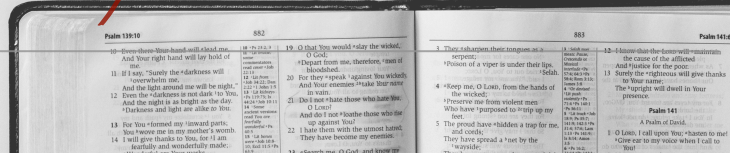


WORDS *of* TRUTH

“Love”



Ladies Article

Kathy Pollard is a graduate of Faulkner University and Bear Valley Bible Institute. She is married to Neal. She is the author of “Return to Me...What to do When Loved Ones Fall Away,” and is a contributor to Christian Woman magazine.

Theme Articles

Carl Pollard is the preacher for the Hebron Church of Christ in Grant, AL. He is a graduate of Bear Valley Bible Institute, and a co-host of “The Bible’s Not Boring” podcast.

Dale Pollard is a BVBI graduate. He is the preacher for the Farley Church of Christ in Huntsville, AL. He also co-hosts “The Bible’s Not Boring” podcast.

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Lehman Ave. Church of Christ in Bowling Green, KY. He is a graduate of Faulkner University and Bear Valley Bible Institute. He is the author of the book, “Rise Up and Build.”



The Greatest Command

Love is the sum of Christianity. It is the nail in the wall of our hearts upon which hangs God’s law and the words of the prophets (Mat. 22:36-40). When we do something in the name of Christ, love must be our motivator, or we do it vainly (1 Cor. 13). Love is selfless ambition. It is the sincere desire to provide for others the things they are lacking, either physically or spiritually.

God’s expressions are to be scrutinized intensely. When the Bible says that God felt or showed something, it is worthy of deep consideration. Everything that God expresses is the fulness or perfection of that thing. God’s love for the ones He created in His image is the perfect, flawless, immaculate expression of love. God’s love is perfectly selfless, perfectly wholehearted, perfectly powerful, and perfectly imitable. His love is also perfectly endless. Let us accept, trust, and share the love of God. Jesus’s death upon the cross of Calvary is where we see God’s love expressed. His resurrection is the consummation of God’s love. Our hope rests in the love of God.

Loving the Lost

Carl Pollard

I was 6 years old and had no idea where my parents were. Every time we went to Walmart, mom would tell us to stay by her side. But I saw the coolest toy dinosaur I had ever seen. So I went to look at it, and got lost. I ran up and down aisles but I couldn't find her. So I started crying and just stood there. Eventually mom found me, and apparently they had been announcing over the loud speaker that my mom was up at the front, but I never heard.

It's a terrible feeling to be lost. We've all experienced it before. There's a very special chapter in the book of Luke. It's called by many "God's Lost and Found Department." Luke 15 contains three parables that convey God's love for the lost. If we want to be a true child of God we must love what the Father loves. In this chapter we find three examples of the lost and God's love for them. In this chapter, one of the things that stands out the most is God's concern for sinners, but also His overflowing joy for their return. In this chapter we will understand better God's love for mankind, and the value of a soul. The true Christian will try to imitate this same love for the lost soul that is found here in this chapter.

The Lost Sheep (1-7)

Sheep aren't the smartest of animals, they can be spooked easily and if their wool gets out of hand they can get stuck just by falling over. It's very fitting that we are compared to sheep. We don't always make the wisest decisions, but if we would just follow the shepherd we would never have a problem. There are numerous ways that we can become lost, but many times it is due to our own ignorance. Just like a sheep. We become a meal for the devil the second we leave the protection of the shepherd. God's love for the lost is something that is truly inspiring.

Animals tend to have a wandering nature about them. We are no different in that sense. We want to wander, and explore. But it can be eternally damaging if we lose our souls in the process. So many different kinds of sins can pique our interest or get us curious. But Satan has been tempting Christians for thousands of years. He knows what works. He knows how to get a Christian to wander away from the shepherd. But it happens. People do fall away. Thankfully that isn't the end of the story. The shepherd longs for his sheep to return. He goes out and finds it, and when he does he's joyful! God rejoices over our returned souls! Do we understand the pain we cause God when we fall away? Each one of us has the personal choice to make: Will I please God? Or will I break His heart? Many people have chosen to desert God. We must imitate the Father in loving those who have gone astray. We must show the same concern that this shepherd had for his sheep.

The Lost Coin (8-10)

I don't want to throw my brother Dale under the bus, but that dude loses everything. It's almost a daily occurrence that he will ask me if I've seen his keys, or wallet, or shoes, or his car. There's something about losing a valuable that unsettles us. We search and search for it, and when we finally find it, we're thrilled! The coin this woman was looking for was worth about one day's wage. In today's standards that's about 3.25 cents. Time and time again Luke stresses the value of one. Forget about the nine other coins, the one missing is what has value. If only we had this mentality with the lost souls around us. Imagine the impact we could have if we put this kind of energy into saving the lost souls around us.

In Luke 15 Jesus tells us that you can be lost out of ignorance (the sheep), you can be lost out of carelessness (misplacing the coin), and finally you can be lost by choice (the prodigal son). Just because one was out of ignorance and one was out of carelessness, does not excuse the fact that they are lost. A found soul causes joy.

The Lost Son (11-32)

In loving the lost we should imitate the father in Luke 15:11-32. Notice his response to his son: He was hopeful for his son to return. He was waiting and saw him from far off. He was compassionate. He runs out to him. He showered him with love. In loving the lost, do we show this same care and concern as the father in this parable? It is a command that we love the lost and we search for them, because what is lost has an eternal impact. Notice the structure of Luke 15: 1 out of 100, 1 out of 10, 1 out of 2. Each one is just as valuable as the next. Every soul is worth loving. Every soul is worth fighting for.

In London there is an official governmental office for lost and found items. It is the London Transport's "Lost Property Office." It is located on the side of the Baker Street Station, just across the street from the fictitious residence of Sherlock Holmes. It has been there since 1933, and it is where all the lost items found on or in any of London's transportation systems (subways, buses, cabs, etc.) are placed to be reclaimed. Every year between 150,000 and 200,000 items are found and turned in to the LPO where officials attempt to locate owners and return their lost items.

Every year people lose wheelchairs, false teeth, watches, backpacks and lunch pails, umbrellas, cell phones, and what have you. Between 2009 and 2010, people turned in 38,000 books, 29,000 bags and 28,000 pieces of clothing. Oddities found and turned in included urns with human remains, a suitcase full of money, a human skull, and a lawnmower.

People lose valuable items all the time, but most have lost their soul — the most valuable of their possessions, and they don't even realize it. The sheep knew it was lost when it couldn't find the flock, and some people will understand that something is missing in their life and search for it. The coin didn't realize it was lost, because...well, it was a coin. Some today will live as if nothing is missing. The prodigal son illustrates those who are lost, and know where to return when they wish to come home.

Our job today as Christians is to show people what is missing. We are to be a shining light to them in darkness. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3-4). When I was lost in Walmart, I regretted that I chased after the toy dinosaur. All I wanted was to find my mom again. I was so happy when I saw her.

You may have a close friend that is searching for truth, and you will see the happiness you give them when they find what is missing, as Christians we are tasked with loving the lost, and what a privilege it is to be apart of sharing the joy of salvation with a lost and dying world.

Loving the Preacher

Kathy Pollard

I have loved preachers for as long as I can remember. I grew up the daughter of a preacher and then married a preacher. My family is now made up of a father-in-law, brothers-in-law, and sons who preach. My husband and I were also blessed to spend several years working with a school of preaching, so all my life I've been surrounded by the "beautiful feet of those who preach the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15). While preacher personalities and delivery styles may differ, most are the same in one essential way: their desire to touch hearts with God's Word. Preachers love people! They demonstrate that love through their ministry efforts and their demeanor. How can people show their love for their preacher? The apostle Paul was a gospel preacher (1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:11). He had the opportunity to work with many churches. In his inspired letters, he mentioned specific ways the Christians brought him joy and made him give thanks. He also revealed ways he was let down by his brethren. From this insight, consider five ways to make your preacher feel loved. Even though Paul wasn't married, we will look at how to love the preacher as his wife and as his church family.

Be a fellow worker. Paul gave thanks for his "fellow workers" and specifically mentioned them by name (Rom. 16:3-21). Two of them, Priscilla and Aquila, were so invested that Paul knew they were willing to "risk their own necks" for him (v. 3-4). We often quote Paul's beautiful greeting to the church at Philippi. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all" (Phil. 1:3-4). But what brought Paul such joy when he thought of them? It was their "participation in the gospel from the first day until now" (v. 5). Paul was encouraged by the Christians in Thessalonica when they "imitated him" by sharing the Word they received with as many people as they could (1 The. 1:6-8). Be your preacher's fellow worker.

As his church family: Preachers love to hear from church members who are putting the Word into action. Call or text him during the week to tell him about that spiritual conversation with your co-worker or that outreach opportunity. It will put wind in his sails! His work is all about reaching souls and building up the Body. Look for ways to roll up your sleeves and help accomplish those goals. If you're not sure how YOU can be a fellow worker, ask him. He will smile so big.

As his wife: Remember that you are a team. Please try not to resent the inconvenient calls or interruptions. Help him bear the load. Be a cheerful partner in getting to know your church family by having them in your home. Go with him to make visits when you can and let him see your excitement for Bible studies. Ministry TOGETHER keeps him encouraged and even strengthens your marriage and family.

Stand by him. "No one supported me, but all deserted me" (2 Tim. 4:16). Paul was attacked and unfairly accused. He had to defend himself along with the gospel. It must've been a lonely time indeed. He pressed on, though, because the "Lord stood with him and strengthened him" (v. 17). Don't let your preacher get discouraged. Stand by him!

As his church family: Remember that your preacher is trying his best to be like Paul and "not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts. 20:27). I don't know any preachers who actually enjoy standing before the congregation to talk about church discipline, what God says about divorce, sensitive or unpopular current issues. You can show your support by offering verbal affirmation after he addresses difficult topics. You can tell the elders that you appreciate his balance and soundness. You could send him a card thanking him for his diligence. And if others start grumbling about him, remind them that he is teaching the hard truths because he loves them.

As his wife: Your husband can endure almost anything when you are by his side supporting him. Tell him you're proud of his courage for upholding the Truth. If he starts backpedaling a little bit, gently admonish him by reminding him that the Lord will stand with him and strengthen him. It can be tempting to worry about how tough lessons might impact your friendships in the church, but don't ever discourage your husband from preaching them.

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Loving the Elders

Dale Pollard

Though Scripture doesn't say, you can be sure David's sheep had no idea how lucky they were to have a shepherd like him. They were just sheep after all. How could they fully appreciate the extent that David went to in order to keep them safe? Before this begins to sound ridiculous, let's remember that at least two of David's sheep were carried off in the jaws of a lion and a bear. When the terrified bleating of an unfortunate sheep is heard by the shepherd, he sprints after the wild animal knowing all the while — it's just a sheep. It's just one sheep! Nevertheless, David strikes the predator and saves the sheep (1 Sam. 17:34-35).

What made David a good shepherd? It certainly wasn't his stature. The average male of his day stood around five feet tall. He was also the youngest of his family, and often unappreciated (1 Sam. 16:11; 17:29, 33). It was David's heart, not his height, that made him exceptional. He was a natural shepherd of sheep, and of people.

David is sent by his father, Jesse, to deliver bread for his brothers, who are among Saul's army. When he arrives on scene, everyone is afraid and unwilling to take a stand against the arrogant Goliath. But before the giant warrior from Gath meets the shepherd boy from Bethlehem, a few more giants will be faced.

The first giant was the giant of **degradation**.

David's own brother, Eliab, would greet him with two belittling questions that would make a lesser man feel sheepish, but not this shepherd. Eliab asks, "why have you come down here?" and, "who is watching the few sheep?" David's brother doesn't think he belongs among warriors and that he is only capable of handling a small number of simple animals.

The second giant was that of **accusation**.

In the same breath, Eliab would accuse and insult David three different times. He claims, "I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is. You've only come to watch the battle." How wrong he was and how dare he insult such a godly man! It's interesting to note that David had an answer to each of these questions and accusations, but never attempts to defend himself. His father sent him, that's why he was there. He was there to deliver nourishment for this dear brother who had, no doubt, worked up an appetite doing absolutely nothing. No retaliation or snarky remark would escape from the shepherd's mouth because nothing like that was in his heart (Matt. 12:34).

The third giant David would conquer would be the towering giant of **indignity**.

He didn't shame his brother and he didn't let his brother's shaming keep him from shining.

Shepherds put up with a lot, don't they? Good shepherds *really* put up with a lot. Faithful God-fearing elders within the Lord's church all over the world are faced with giants more often than they should be. Sometimes, the giants they face are their own sheep. How easy it is to make confident accusations against them and to question their intentions, hearts, and capabilities. That unpaid servant of God is more often than not the first one to come running when the bleating of a wayward member is heard. When we find ourselves in clutches of our various trials, they attempt to pry us out. At times they earnestly pray over and take on burdens that aren't theirs to carry. Faithful elders will find themselves in a position in which they could make the sheep feel ashamed, but choose to save the feelings of others because that's what a good shepherd does. It's not their height, it's their heart. The sheep need to love their shepherds, because the shepherd's love their sheep.

Loving the Members of the Church

Neal Pollard

Someone tasked with taking a picture of a couple or small group will coach them to stand closer together, maybe adding, "Act like you like one another." They will typically chuckle and comply. How many moms have exhorted their squabbling children with a similar phrase?

A quick perusal of social media, with its all-too-often divisive rhetoric and pejorative comments, must frequently draw the same desire from the God of heaven. Whenever He sees His children at each other's throats, complete with nasty put-downs, sarcasm, and venomous invectives, can we envision Him pleased? Regardless of whether one is motivated by defending the faith or some dearly-cherished viewpoint, he or she does not have to drown responses in hateful, provocative words. But, it happens many times over on a daily basis. For those of us who have non-Christian or new-Christian friends with privy to such comments from professed, mature Christians, we have to wonder if, contemptuously, they chide, "Act like you like one another." More than that, Scripture convicts us on such a count. Consider a small sampling of passages:

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22; cf. 4:8).

"To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col. 3:12-14).

"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor" (Rom. 12:9-10).

"But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way" (Jam. 3:8-10).

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

The noble pursuit of defending the faith and protecting the purity of doctrine can get lost or totally nullified when the most casual observer of our words cannot find the love or detect the genuine concern in the midst of the biting, devouring, caustic quips and one-liners. How we need to pause and be introspective. "Every man's way is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 21:2a; cf. 16:2). I can easily rationalize and convince myself I am spiritually fine in spite of my own unrighteousness, as easily as the adulterer, the one in religious error, the drunkard, and the like can do with their iniquity. Why not, as we sift through the complicated maze of "interpersonal dynamics," deal with each other patiently, giving the benefit of the doubt wherever possible, letting lovingkindness lead the way? We are not compromising divine truth, relinquishing a scriptural position, or shying away from sharing God's Word when we make the effort to act like we like one another. We are submitting to the ethical blueprint commanded in Scripture (see above). "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Cor. 16:4).

Let's be reminded of what the church is. It is the precious, beloved bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-25; Rev. 19:7; 21:2). It is that institution purchased by His very life's blood (Acts 20:28). It is that which was thought up by God from the eternity before time as is the expression of His manifold wisdom (Eph. 3:9-11). It is the place where Christ is glorified (Eph. 3:21; 5:27). It is the present the Son will present to His Father when time is no more (1 Cor. 15:24). It is that and truly so much more.

God designed the church. Reckless criticism of it--and its members--is reckless criticism of Him. All of us should be determined to improve in every area of our spiritual lives, to be for others what we need to be, to conquer faults and sins in our lives. We should also extend to others the grace we intensely desire to receive when we stand before the King at the last day! Yes, the church is broken, but not in the sense that it cannot help, serve, minister, love, and encourage. Let each of us strive to be the church we want the church to be. Model and exemplify it. Emit the fragrance of Christ. That way, the broken church can help mend the broken lives that make it up. Above all, let's act like we *love* each other who make up Christ's precious bride!

Pseudo-Love and Biblical Love

Cliff Goodwin

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood topics of the Bible is one of the major themes of the Bible — love. So much is said today about love, but often so little is actually correct. It is imperative that one properly understand love if he/she is to understand God, for God is love (1 John 4:8). Further, it is absolutely imperative that one understand love in order to go to heaven, for the greatest and second-greatest commands center around this concept (Mat. 22:35-40). Love is one of the most powerful forces at work in the world today and needs to be in the life of every person striving to go to heaven. As with any matter pertaining to life and godliness, the Bible is the complete manual or resource book explaining the truly wonderful concept of love (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Love is difficult for so many to grasp because of its selfless nature. Often man's tendency is to be selfish and self-seeking. Love, however, is antithetical to this perspective and conduct. Love focuses on others; it places others even ahead of itself. So much of what is labeled love in this day and time is actually the veiled exercise of selfishness. When a young man seeks to compromise a young woman sexually, all in the name of "love," he is actually only pursuing his own selfish gratification. When a person "looks the other way," ignoring open sin, such is *not* the loving thing to do. Sure, such tolerance and compromise are so often styled "love," but they are actually the products of a selfish will seeking the easy way out. Example after example could be given of this pseudo-love that is being pushed upon society today. Nonetheless, the principle is always the same: love seeks the good and welfare of another, even above that for oneself. Anything coming short of this virtue is not true love.

By inspiration, Paul described the focus of love negatively in First Corinthians 13:5, "...seeketh *not* her own..." (emphasis added, CG). Satan and the world preach, "Look out for number one!" The Bible teaches, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," (Phi. 2:4). The devil urges one to serve himself, his needs, his desires. The Bible teaches that one must serve Christ (cf. Jam. 1:1) and others (Gal. 5:13). Love is just another of the innumerable areas of spirituality that has been attacked and assaulted by Satan and his evil servants. The devil knows that if he can skew one's understanding of love, he can undermine that person spiritually. As with all sin, selfishness is at the heart of Satan's schemes.

One sees the perfect and matchless example of love's focus in the life of Christ. Christ didn't leave heaven because He was seeking his own good, his own advancement. He didn't become flesh because such a state was preferable to

the glory he enjoyed with the Father (Phi. 2:5-8; cf. John 17:5). To the contrary, all that he did in performing his redemptive work was because he loved man and sought his eternal well-being! Christ laid down his life willingly (John 10:18). Such love should never be taken for granted! Its degree is so profound and its scope so grand that the Spirit inspired Paul to write, "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:19).

As one understands the focus of love, its selfless attitude toward others, it is further necessary that one realizes love *acts*. It is not static, but rather dynamic. This fact, too, is contrary to the pseudo-love being marketed to the masses today. Many are caused to think of love in terms of a "warm, fuzzy feeling," an attitude of mind inwardly. True love will not be contained; it cannot be concealed! True love will manifest itself outwardly — toward God and fellow-man.

Alluded to earlier, the greatest commandment given to man is that he love God with all of his being (cf. Mat. 22:37). How does one love a Being whom man has never seen (cf. John 1:18)? It can be done, for Peter wrote to early Christians who had never seen Christ yet loved him nonetheless (1 Pet. 1:8). The Bible clearly tells one how to love God, and its instructions are in keeping with the focus of love itself. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous," (1 John 5:3). To love an invisible Being, man must simply do what that Being commands for him to do! Does this sound too simple? Think about the selfless focus of love. Loving God involves obedience. Obedience involves the setting aside of one's will in favor of another; seeking another in place of oneself is the nature of love. Hence, obeying God is loving God! People may boast all day about their love for God. However, until their love is manifested in obedient action, it is not true love at all.

What about the second-greatest command given unto man? Man must love his neighbor as himself (Mat. 22:39). Perhaps many have never noticed the similarities between this verse and Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Both of these verses involve self. Man must love his neighbor as himself; man must treat his neighbor the way he wants to be treated. Can these two concepts be separated? Absolutely not! Would a hungry man want to be fed by another who was in the position to do so? Certainly. Therefore, when we have food, we should feed those who have not (cf. Mat. 25:35; Jam. 2:15-17).

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Grow your faith and your love for the saints. Paul always looked for Christians who had faith in Christ Jesus and who loved each other. In at least seven of his letters, he thanked God for them because of those two things (Rom. 1:8-12; Eph. 1:15-16; Col. 1:4; 1 The. 1:3; 2 The. 1:3; Philemon 5; 2 Tim. 1:5). It gave him joy and encouraged him. And no wonder, since a church growing their faith and love will be strong and united!

As his church family: Let your preacher know how you are growing your own faith. Are you studying the Scriptures he mentioned in his sermon on your own time? Are you sharing discoveries with him from your personal Bible study? How are you living out your faith? Let him see your love for your church family. Are you having fellow Christians into your home? Are you building each other up every time you see each other? These wonderful actions are beautiful to a preacher!

As his wife: Your husband is a preacher but you are responsible for your own spiritual growth and development. He will delight in having spiritual conversations with you! Listen to his sermons as a member of the body, not just his wife. And let him see your love for the saints by refraining from gossiping about them and looking for ways to comfort and support them.

Pray for him. Paul was an apostle. He was inspired. He performed miracles. Yet he still coveted the prayers of his fellow Christians. He said their prayers helped him (2 Cor. 1:11). He asked for prayers for boldness to preach the gospel (Eph. 6:18-19). Your preacher is not an apostle or inspired or a miracle worker. He definitely desires your prayers.

As his church family: As Sunday nears, let him know you are praying for him. And if you really want to make him feel loved, pull him aside occasionally and pray *with* him.

As his wife: Include your husband's ministry in every prayer. Squeeze his hand before he preaches and tell him you just prayed for him.

Make room for him in your heart. This is what Paul asked for from his Corinthian brethren. He reminded them that they were in his heart and pleaded that they make room for him in theirs. It brought him comfort to know of the times they thought of him, worried about him, felt things with him (2 Cor. 7:4-7). Have you opened your heart to your preacher?

As his church family: Don't be afraid to get close to your preacher and his family. Some hold back because "preachers come and go." We're not promised a tomorrow with

anyone, including spouses, but that shouldn't keep us from opening our hearts wide and building strong relationships. Treat your preacher like the family he is.

As his wife: Don't be like some wives who resent the attention their husband gets. Always be his biggest cheerleader and supporter. Don't hold back when complimenting his work or his lessons. No matter what anyone else says to him, your opinion means the most. Every day look for a specific way to show him how much he means to you.

You can never show your preacher too much love. God will bless you for that. He loves preachers, too.

Pseudo-Love and Biblical Love

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Such practice is both loving and in compliance with the "Golden Rule." Love acts, and in very simple terms, love treats fellow-man the way one wants to be treated. There is an ultimate sense in which one *may* and *must* love his neighbor. This is in view of eternity. True love would never want anyone to perish in hell. But further, true love would *act* in order to prevent one's perishing in hell. Is this not what God and Christ did? God was not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9), so He sent Jesus into the world (John 3:16). As God has loved man and acted for his eternal good, so man must love fellow-man and act for his eternal good. True love would dictate that one take every opportunity to teach the gospel to others. God well knows the value of one human soul (Mat. 16:26), and God's faithful children know the same (cf. Pro. 11:30b). Pseudo-love is passive, squandering opportunities in favor of selfish endeavors. True love is active, working to bring others to Christ. True love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6).

[Bro. Goodwin's article originally appeared in the April 2007 edition of *WoT*. He is the preacher for the Ironaton Church of Christ.]

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ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

Question: Acts 10 says that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (v.43-45). Verse 47 says the Gentiles were saved before baptism. You teach that baptism saves? But the Holy Spirit is not given to an unsaved, lost person! Explain that!

Answer: In Acts 2:1-11, the apostles received the Holy Spirit, but His coming was not involved in their salvation. It empowered them to know what to say and show the people around them that they were God's messengers. In Acts 10, God sent the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, not to forgive them of their sins, but to confirm from heaven that it was proper to preach the gospel message to the Gentiles and receive them. So, as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them, Peter said, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we." In other words, if God has indicated by this public demonstration of the Holy Spirit coming on Gentiles that the division between Jews and Gentiles is broken down, then let's proceed to baptize for the forgiveness of sins those whom God has identified. The passage does NOT say that God granted them forgiveness without baptism. Rather, He sent His Holy Spirit to show that they were proper subjects for baptism. Peter refers to this in Acts 11:15-17. He says that Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit as had come upon the apostles at the beginning (i.e., Pentecost). The Spirit's coming on Pentecost was not connected with the Apostles being saved from sin but as a message to the people that God was using them as His messengers. To the household of Cornelius, God, likewise, was not granting salvation but was sending a message that Gentiles were now proper subjects to be saved like everyone else (i.e., by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism). Thus, the purpose of giving the Holy Spirit was called "baptism of the Holy Spirit" according to Acts 11:16 and Acts 1:5.

-Mark Nichols Posey

mark.nichols.posey@gmail.com