

## Love

by Hendrik Joubert

When I read what Wikipedia says of love – “The word love can refer to a variety of different feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from generic pleasure to intense interpersonal attraction. This diversity of meanings, combined with the complexity of the feelings involved, makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, even compared to other emotional states.” – I find it difficult to apply most of the characteristics of love God supplied through the apostle Paul. ***Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. (1Corinthians 13:6-8)***

The latter definition is supplied by the Almighty God who created man for His purpose and His pleasure, and the former a human attempt at defining love. Jehovah (Who is love, **1John 4:8**) reveals love not as an emotion difficult to define, but rather difficult to express properly. Even a casual reading of these characteristics reveals that I am not the one receiving, but rather giving. This love then seems a duty, and not a superficial emotion which overwhelms. Husbands are *commanded to love their own wives as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:28)*, and *as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (Ephesians 5:25)*

This commandment, as every other commandment, is easy to “obey” when the wife makes it easy for the husband to love her; however when she finds it difficult to be in submission (also commanded, **1Peter 3:1-6**) the husband may not find it easy to obey. The wife may have her reason why it is difficult to submit to the husband, especially in our politically correct society where we will redefine terms under the guise of being scholarly, nevertheless it remains a commanded. Obedience only then becomes submission to the will of God, and not what I happened to like. The obedience of one is not subject to the obedience of the other.

Notice how the characteristics of love addresses the problem as it is revealed as a selfless action performed for the good of the other person. Immediately we see God in this love – God is love. We are *easily provoked* to “punish” others for *wrong suffered* as we simply will not put up with their sin. (*bear all things*) We will not contribute to another’s delinquency, and there you have it. ***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. (Romans 12:19)***

To disobey specific instructions of God in the name of love is to abuse love, as love ***rejoices with the truth***. It is rather disconcerting to see how we will sometimes work to ignore all the Bible has to say on any given subject in an attempt to justify our imperfect

understanding. Consider the following characteristic of love: **love believes all things?** It is obvious that one cannot believe all things in the general sense of the word: **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** (1 John 4:1)

Once again the ingenious simplicity of salvation by faith becomes obvious when one considers that **those who do not love the truth** will be drawn away by delusions. (2Thessalonians 2:8-10) One who is looking for a way to circumvent the simple instructions of God, thereby illustrating faith in Him, will be deluded into believing that he or she is justified in the name of love. Wisdom coming from God also says: **The naive believes everything, But the sensible man considers his steps.** (Proverbs 14:15)

Love is willing to give the benefit of the doubt until otherwise proven; it is not suspicious of everyone and everything. This is especially true among those who have obeyed the gospel. (1 Thessalonians 1:8) Notice how investigation is considered noble: **Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.** (Acts 17:11) False teachers will not consider it so.

God warns us that those who would have their ears tickled will find teachers who will accommodate their desire: **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,<sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.** (2Timothy 4:3-4) Consider the denominational world in the light of this warning. There are literally thousands of churches teaching different things and one is encouraged to *worship with the church of your choice*, and not *the church which God bought with His own blood.* (Acts 20:28)

The love of God is demonstrated in this very act as Jesus demonstrates His selfless love by dying **to take away the sin of the world.** (John 1:29) **Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.** (John 15:13) The sinner reciprocates with a totally submissive love, demonstrating faith in God. **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.** (1John 5:3)