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THE INTRODUCTION

By this perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

—1 John 3: 16

THE EXCITING LOVE that springs from the genius of the New Testament covenant is the motivation of Christianity. What kind of love was there before Jesus came? Our Creator held His will secretly from time immemorial. His mind was not so concretely expressed until the revelation of Christ incarnate. Though in times past His love was evident, His love is now present in His Holy Spirit.

God is no longer content to hover above us, He has moved into our hearts. Without salvation, the love which people have in their lives is incomplete, flawed and misguided. The historical record demonstrates that Jesus' New liberating love has been of incomparably great benefit throughout the world.

New life in Jesus begins when we confess that we lack this love, repent and give our lives over to Him. God has hope for all, a plan for each one and so we all figure in His design! Believers are cheated when unbelief pops up in all its ugly forms. If we get swamped with

worries and fears, even you and I can be neutralized. Leaning on our own understanding and flexing our muscles is a dead-end road too. Our ways don't work so then we blame others. But shoveling blame and making excuses and evading the real issues won't help. How can we ever get right with God? Believe God is there; search for Him. Hope goes for broke. I found Him in the name of Jesus and He was personally there for me—one on one—that's how I found His love. Thankfully, a whole lot of Christians were more than generous to help me at that point.

Vibrant Christians affect everyone around as we pour living prayer into all we do. Many saintly idioms are mere misnomers. We can say Trust the Lord but you and I have to be rehearsed about what counts, be blessed to be a blessing and stay out of trouble with God. Jesus didn't tell His followers to get ready, but to be ready! More now than at the first, gaining better experience of course, the walk of *faith* makes *love* easier.

True love is the *gift* of God. The Greek word *χάρις*, "*charis*," translates in our New Testament to words like gift, grace, favor and care. As we freely care for others *grace* occurs. The same root word is seen in the term charismatic; care is automatic in the Holy Spirit. This limitless *grace* in the genius of New Testament *love* is only gained by *faith*.

Hopefully you will retrieve from this book a stronger, invigorated *faith*, one where *love* is the First Commandment. The Scriptures are written for each of us to comprehend. Yet even with a lifetime of study we will not learn everything. You and I cannot fully explain life but love means we try and live right. God's truth is not up for our any interpretation. We do not read the Bible for what we can get out of it as much as for what God has put into the words. Then apply it. This writing is for your review; it is based on my personal background and knowledge having no formal schooling or advanced skills, the outlook of fresh belief; *love should come from faith without fail*.

For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

—1 Peter 2: 15 & 16

We must learn the New Testament model of sanctification and spiritual warfare. Our God is teaching us to trust Him. If He lets us go through times of testing in our lives and perhaps temptation or incontrovertible sin itself, this is not to excuse ourselves from His presence but to be drawn or forced to His side. Therefore grace is not the tool to cover our tracks but indeed it makes the path to God. Is there any other way than grace to get closer to God? We can do more than defend ourselves from sin. We can conquer sin. We can serve others in this way of grace.

Simply put, if we correct ourselves the Lord will not need to. God is touched by our prayers. Find yourself close to Him with the confidence that He is completely merciful. “*Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil,*” Proverbs 16: 6 NIV. God is moved by our repentance and our good behavior. Faith by itself is no faith at all. True faith will be proven. Love shows in our honesty and integrity as we take our responsibilities seriously. There is nothing quite like the satisfying feeling of being a New person. All thanks goes to Jesus. His forgiveness, goodness and grace make this good difference, keeping us in right relationship with Him. Your behavior will say I am now becoming a New creature.

In the Twentieth Century quite a few well-intentioned Bible-believing Christians underestimated the New Testament Scriptures and understated love. While on one side they leaned on their laurels in lenient “loving” liberalism, our reply was many “correct” doctrinal positions laid right on the line, dead right. Our authenticity often wound up right dead with a sterile narrow testimony. How criminal! There arose simultaneously some

emotionally spiritualized movements giving way from rationality into differing, eccentric churches where again love was devalued. The body of Christ, charismatic, conservative or liberal, crying out for the well-being of all others must be guided by *faith with love!*

The dependability of Scripture has demonstrated over and again our inability and God's infallibility. Examine yourself. We are found guilty, having nothing in and of ourselves unless we embrace the endless capacity of our Savior's heart. We cannot live up to God's expectations. No one has the capability or the character required to do what our Holy God has called us to do. The record shows throughout history that without the truth of God, all of man's so-called religion is empty and fruitless.

Even the best Christians find life hard. Each of us will look suspect to someone at one time or another. We all sin. Everybody fails or who bears the more responsibility? The Bible warns of false doctrines and phony believers. We can say we know the authorized pathway of Christianity, read the Bible correctly, but how does God say it? The obvious truth is that people will only see the bona fide *faith* of true believers by our everlasting *love*.

We commit our lives to Jesus Christ and then Satan attacks us where it hurts. People wonder what's going on. If you identify yourself as a loving Christian, the devil will hurt you repeatedly in all kinds of ways. You will be pushed down but get back up and say, "I still love." The old enemy will cut your legs out from under you again, then you get back up and you say it more, "I still love." But do you see the demons trying to silence us on this point? They are hitting us relentlessly all across Christendom. Know who you are and where you are in relation to our Holy God. Satan can only mix up the issues. He does because we frighten him. Satan cannot undo what Jesus accomplished on the cross and he could never have stopped Jesus' resurrection. Study the Bible and get it right and the enemy will flee. Get up and loudly proclaim, "I still love."

Some Christian marriages can crumble. Christian teenagers may rebel and many fall into drink or drugs. It is hard to grow up. Earning a living is rough and giving is tougher. Too often we hand over the duties in our communities to the government when we ought to volunteer our time. Do we have to be popular to have a major influence? We can afford to be bolder! Ask God to prove true through you, through and through. Why be afraid to love?

Life in this world is risky and the longer we live the greater our odds of danger. “*I find then a law, that, when I would do good, sin is present with me.*” Romans 7: 21. We’d be sunk at the first shot without God on our side. Sometimes it all goes wrong but God still cares.

What does it mean, “I once was lost but now I’m found?” It is like being lost in the woods and getting found. If I am trying to be uniformly perfect, earning my way to salvation, I will get even more lost. When working in my own power it shows, because I am trying to be somebody I’m not. However impossible or illogical it seems, and it looks altogether wrong sometimes, it is possible to walk in love when we are in Jesus Christ. You and I need to call out to God.

The honest question after we are saved is, “What difference does Jesus make?” Aren’t Christians designed to prove faith by actions and through change? Stumbling on in sin doesn’t just hurt ourselves we grieve God’s Spirit and injure others around us. Some think they can be *reckless* and still remain *wreck-less*. Others suppose they need to be a *recluse* to *sin less*. We are not sinless. God’s bountiful agreement in the Bible gives us a windfall. Believe it. Let’s take the plan off the drawing board and begin to build. I hope you find here as you read a biblical, comprehensive, detailed study on *faith* and *love*. The *love* of God rules in the Christian heart by *faith*.

—Kyle Hester

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

—Revelation 22: 17

CHAPTER 1

THE GREATEST IS LOVE

Love never faileth

—1 Corinthians 13: 8

LOVE NEVER FAILS. Can we say this? We look for love but it is found missing. Count all of the world's astounding advancements, comforts, entertainment and pleasures yet people complain of an increasing ambivalence that marks our time. Will they see this title and stop to ask how Christians can believe *love never fails*.

Everyone longs for it but the trouble is we are all sinners pursuing human love. Do we have a grip on God's love through Jesus Christ, His real love? *Hope* requires of us an amount of *faith* and *patience* for the blessed *life*. God's very greatest promise in the whole Bible is New Testament *love*—secure, resilient and lasting—if we can *believe* it. This love is ultimately God's highest achievement in all eternity.

God's *love never fails*. Our world romanticizes the idea that a few people find a beautifully happy human love. Movies and love songs suggest the quest for a flowery fairy tale love that never ends. Eventually we get hurt by the loss of worldly love and we

immediately cry for a more permanent love. Beleaguered by terrible disappointments, many will shun all compassion saying love has failed them. They try to prove love false thinking to pacify their damaged ego. Failure need not be a foregone conclusion when God's *love never fails*.

Love needs faith. A Christian wants to believe God's Word is always victorious. Experience, however; teaches us to believe that love falls short. We face many harsh realities while holding to the ideals of Scripture. How can we reconcile experience and Scripture? The Bible becomes the issue in our mind. Do we really understand it? We are fallen sinners, so how on earth does God's good love succeed in our human lives? We need to see that with God's love... our *faith* is not just important, it is huge.

Searching the Bible to find my one big answer, *love through faith*, solved it all. Growing in this understanding has become the main goal of my life. Put the ingredients of a cake into a bowl and then into a greased pan. Bake for an hour. What will you get? A burnt, ugly mess! What went wrong? You did not mix the ingredients. You had the right stuff but forgot step 2, "Mix." God's *love* must be "*mixed with faith*," Heb 4: 2. This is not something I got from others and I hardly see it taught to this day. Sharing this message of *faith* and *love* is my passion.

My wife and I found wrapping paper in the local Bible book store which very appropriately said, "May your marriage be blessed with faith, love & joy." We bought it for the thought it conveyed. The new couple probably tore the present open and threw the wrapping paper away. With the countless details of a wedding and many gifts, the bride and groom can't be expected to dwell on the significance of every inspiring word. So Christians may not see how *love* connected directly to *faith* produces real *joy*.

Like newlyweds we start out fresh. Over the years we come up against troubles in our broken world and our joy gets blown away. None of us here is perfect. Marriages definitely need forgiveness to

get beyond the fractious times so we can live in harmony. In other words *love* requires a strong *faith* in Jesus.

It takes *faith* because *love* does not make people do everything we want them to. We cannot have everything our way. Why don't you and I let others win sometimes? True joy doesn't come simply from having things perfect.

With *faith* in Jesus, *love* does not fail. Good things don't come to an end after all. Don't you want this righteous love that will never die? Jesus' love does not stop and if you receive His gift of eternal life your life, too, will never cease. Christians believe that *faith alone saves* and Jesus said His *First Commandment is love*. What *does* happen when true believers combine *faith* and *love* in Jesus' name in our hearts and our minds? These words, *faith* and *love*, are inseparable and together they are our greatest *hope*. Believers can begin, here on this side of eternity, to see the way *love never fails*.

THIS NEW BEGINNING

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

—2 Corinthians 3: 18

Here is a bold Bible verse. Imagine getting up in the morning, looking in your mirror and seeing a different person looking back at you! You run into another room to a different mirror but again see the eyes of someone else staring back at you. It is not a trick. Your reflection is the very glory of the Lord. Please read the above verse again. You are being changed as perfectly as a mirror's reflection!

Picture this miraculous mirror where you no longer see yourself but the Lord. Sounds impossible? Moses, after receiving the Ten Commandments, had to cover his face because the glory of the Lord on him was so bright. Christians stand in Jesus' shoes with no veil over our faces. Through the *Law of liberty* we now have the

freedom to see that the veil of the Old Testament has been done away by the lone sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The bright light of the Holy Spirit is revealing right now, through our very being, the glory of the Heavenly Father. In that we are presently being sanctified by the blood of Christ His love is noticeable in our lives. To the extent that we walk by *faith* the *love* of God is equally mirrored. The natural person reads the Bible but does not continue in what it says, much like one who looks in a mirror, steps away and their image disappears. Christians, however, perpetually reflect Jesus Christ.

I came to Jesus at a time of deep need when all I saw in life was disillusionment. Friendships, marriages and other affairs of the heart too often failed, causing pain and ruin. How much do we want to retain of our life? We are trying to get it together. There has to be some letting go before a future is to be gained. Yet, it is best to learn the value in what we already have. Not being raised in a Christian home, most of Christianity was alien to me. When Jesus began calling me, I had to cross over a huge distance in order to understand the Gospel. I did begin to hear Him. I had barely any awareness of spiritual things, particularly regarding the biblical church. Jesus became more and more obvious until one day His Holy Spirit awakened my dead soul with His love.

Step back with me, please, to June of 1969 when I started questioning the direction of my life. Sitting with my West Seattle High School graduating class, about to receive my diploma, I suddenly realized that after twelve years of education I was totally unprepared for the world. My well-adjusted high school life had done more to insulate me from the challenges of adulthood than to prepare me for them.

Just the week before graduation, I tried marijuana. Up until then I had been clean and straight. My friend Mike told me that a person could smoke marijuana once every six months with no harm so I tried it. And at a graduation party I got drunk for the first time.

The following week I took LSD on a lark. It was fantastic. It was beautiful. I fell into using LSD several nights a week it was so good. I got off swing shift and jumped into my '62 Chevy II with a 327 V8 and an 8-track stereo playing Jimi Hendrix on LSD, a mind-blowing experience, and drove until the summer sun rose. Man had landed on the moon, a half million hippies were celebrating at Woodstock, and I was relishing my own exploding independence.

In the fall I switched to graveyard so I could take classes at the junior college. Getting off at seven in the morning, I went home to change and raced another forty minutes to school. That lasted only three days. By the third tired trip I just had to drop out. I couldn't do both school and the job; besides, how would I afford school if I quit my job? What's more, so much acid had wiped me out and the whole place reeked of high school with the smell of fresh plastic notebooks and new clothes anyway.

Then as I was turning 18 in October I moved away from home to an apartment with my best friend Vern. I didn't even have hair on my chest yet but I thought life was booming. Soon it turned into a long vivid nightmare lasting many months.

I got stoned every day expecting I was on track to find the weird secrets of life. They advertised on TV in those days, "Join the Navy and see the world." I told a friend who was in the Army that I would see the world better on my own. I hitchhiked around the country a couple of times finding drugs everywhere.

A couple of years of that, I was too spaced out to think or do anything, paranoid and depressed; I grew desperate. What could I do to reverse course? I was hoping for a love that would not kill me. With what reason I had left I held on to believe that something good and right could be found. I was lonely and looking for love because I didn't have it in me to go on by myself. Then people began throwing a confusing number of persuasions at me, cults and other witless fanaticisms.

Jesus started looking uniquely like the only true way. There was a lot of hitchhiking along about then and a lot of good Christians picked me up and shared with me their testimony of salvation. Gospel tracts—which were news to me—were freely handed out on the street. You might remember that people were friendlier in those days. America was open. Soon I wanted to find out more about Jesus and see if He really was alive in Heaven.

One of my brother's army buddies named Ed was a good friend of mine. When he returned home he quit drugs and received Jesus. He wrote to me from Texas and we talked on the phone. He wanted me to visit him. Ed attended a college where a young pastor named Chuck Raup was making friends with students, hoping to form a nucleus of committed young Christians to start a drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation program. He lobbied a year for support from city officials, community organizations and churches. Omni House opened in May of 1971 with Ed and three other guys living there.

It took another phone call on Thanksgiving Day for Ed to get me to come down. He said they would take care of me, feed me and I would have nothing to worry about. I told him I would think about it some more but as soon as I hung up I started packing. Borrowing twenty dollars from my grandmother, I went to an entrance ramp on I-5 South after midnight with my dog Roo in tow and stuck my thumb out.

It was a really rough trip. The devil didn't want me to go. I stood in the winter rain for hours to hitch rides. Six hours after starting out, having gone merely thirty miles, I was standing in Tacoma's morning rush hour traffic begging for another ride south. Roo and I finally crossed the Columbia River at 3:00 in the afternoon, wet and cold.

I didn't rest till I got to Eugene in the evening. The University of Oregon was near the freeway. I found a campus neighborhood hostel, an old house with young people sleeping all over the floor

in every room. There was just enough space for my sleeping bag and Roo and I slept for twelve hours. In the middle of the night I had a dream, like a vision. It was so real and wonderful I swore I would remember it in the morning, but when I awoke I couldn't. It had been a visit to Heaven, paradise beyond description, but I was not allowed to recall it. I'm sure God gave that dream or vision—a taste of what Glory will be like—to sustain me as my travel continued to be hard.

I passed through California in two days and two nights of hitchhiking and didn't thaw out until I got to the Mojave Desert on the fourth day. I got stuck in Palm Springs because ninety out of a hundred cars were new Rolls Royces and the rest were shiny Cadillacs.

In Tucson next, where I stayed overnight, I met a very attractive university student. She asked me to stay for another day so she could show me around the city. The next morning she dropped me off at an entrance ramp heading east. There on the edge of Tucson I had a little talk with myself and told Roo I wanted to go back for her. We crossed to the other side of the freeway, hitched a ride back into town and sat in the middle of the campus until she came along. It was just like in the movie, *The Graduate*. I told her I had come back for her and she admitted she had wanted me to stay.

My tempting Siren and I felt the spark, but by evening the flame was gone and again I planned to leave in the morning. Then an unusually heavy snowfall blanketed Tucson overnight. Roo and I were stuck and she couldn't go to school so we played all day in the snow. Satan had tried his last trick to keep me from going to Texas. After staying four days too long, I called Ed and he wired me money to fly to Dallas. Ed and a friend of his met me at the airport (Love Field!) and drove me the rest of the way. Amen!

I arrived at Omni House in Victoria, TX, population 56,000, in early December. It was a Christian halfway house and community organization with the stated purpose of stopping drug abuse. From

the moment I set foot on the property this group was very generous and accepting of me. I had never seen so much love. They fed and entertained me with southern hospitality the likes of which I had only heard of. I was coming from the fated poverty of a vicious drug culture. Suddenly, encouraging and supportive friends surrounded me, determined to straighten this guy out. It was my first time off drugs for any stretch of time in two and a half years and I felt pretty good. There is a good reason people from up north go south for the winter—the sun—but it was more than that. The love of Jesus was warming my cold heart.

Charlie, one of the young Christian women my age, came every day to talk to me. By the middle of my second week there she was talking to me about Jesus and salvation and listening to her this one afternoon suddenly love welled up inside me. Was I falling in love with her? No, I couldn't relate these feelings to her. Then I wondered if it was one of the other young women I had met. No, again. I thought there had to be somebody on the other end of this love. You can't have love without an object of affection. Since Charlie and I were talking about God at the time, it went through my mind that Jesus must be the One on the other end of this love even though I could not see Him. Jesus was tugging on my heart strings; I tugged back to see if He was really there. My dear friend, Charlie, probably didn't see what was happening in that moment.

At this point Jesus revealed Himself, "*You have taken the bait,*" and He took me. I was hooked for life. The room filled with His love like bright red Jello. Jesus came into my heart and saved me for all eternity. I knew intuitively this love was beyond compare and that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ was alive. Unquestionably I had to follow after His love the rest of my life. I was witnessing such a brilliant presence, a flood of spiritual light and love. Instantaneously I was at home with God and I knew it.

My salvation was immensely overwhelming with the presence of God Himself. Only the Lord knows the transformation that took place in my heart that very moment. All of this happened in a second.

I was not good but God was. When I needed Him most, Jesus provided the way. I was a sinner but God changed my life for the better. I was at my worst when loving Christians reached out to me, not because of my goodness but because of theirs. For that reason their efforts worked. When will my old lost friends realize God loves them? They will only receive when they see their need to believe.

Praise God that He blesses hearts with good feelings. From the start I have tried to do everything possible to get this inner joy, the fire and the warmth that comes from God's Spirit. How much needs to change? I have studied to find the right ways to keep this burning for the Lord and have aimed to do what it takes to foster this excitement.

I know the Christian walk is more than emotions. There are many times when life is unpleasant; for instance, no correction from God seems to be joyous while going through it. I want to work in the middle of life to see Christ bring victories, to find the thrill of overcoming, and to cultivate contentment. Love is an emotion. It is more than that, I know; but let's not leave feelings out of it. Jesus suffered all things for the *joy* that was set before Him, leaving us His example to follow for us to exhibit eternal love.

Man's sin is complex while God's salvation plan is simple. God's plan seems too easy to believe and too good to be true. One man, Jesus, died for all people everywhere for all time. He paid for every sin by His one sacrifice. Jesus, our great High Priest, was righteous; yet He suffered the penalty for our transgressions. Anyone, any place, any time, can freely receive everlasting life by believing that God has raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, "*Who was delivered*

*for our offences, and was raised for our justification.” Romans 4: 25.
Never leave love out of your faith; it is the reason Jesus came.*

BELIEVE THE LOVE

*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us.
God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God
in Him.*

—1 John 4: 16

A year later one of my Omni House friends, Richard, asked me how I got saved and I told him my story of how Jesus’ love came pouring into my heart in a rush. Back at home later that day I wondered where exactly my conversion was described in the Bible. What reference would it be? The one verse that surfaced became my life verse, 1 John 4: 16. Some would say the Holy Spirit comes in to cleanse us from sin and this is true; for me He was love. This is how the Holy Spirit of God moved into my heart. Jesus took our sin on the cross so we can live the rest of Eternity with His love.

God’s love set my heart free. I can think back and remember similar feelings in my childhood. When I was home from school sick I would wake up on the couch with the afternoon sun shining in, feeling better and hearing the hissing of my mother’s iron in the dining room as it slid over fresh, clean clothes. To me that was love.

Then there was the still small voice of truth that came in my teen years. It wasn’t my conscience; it was more than that. But it was quietly hidden, too. The honesty of this inspiration fought to be heard amongst all other causes. It seemed I could overcome all things if only I listened to that voice. God was calling me even then.

The staff at the halfway house put up with a lot from me, but did not give up. That first year as a Christian was seriously the hardest of my life and yet my faith strengthened miraculously. This

is how the confidence in my salvation came. I didn't ever want to plateau. I went through the most difficult changes, withdrawal and healing. I was one hurt'n person for certain. The staff there gave a lot for which I am so in debt. After that I prayed for God to keep me always growing.

These friends were determined and they planned. They held worried meetings to discuss my strange behavior. Later they told me they had assigned volunteer members two at a time to watch me round the clock. It angered me when I found out yet I thanked God they saved my life. They cared. Nobody could have seen the big change taking place inside me. Only God knew the job required all their attention and they gave it. Only God could have known where to find these people and how to get me there.

I stayed at Omni House learning and working and within a year I was put on staff. We operated a twenty-four hour telephone hotline, an educational drug-abuse prevention program and spoke in schools, churches and I even on the local pop radio station. I grew increasingly dedicated to rescuing anyone that was drugged out before it was too late. Nothing was better than seeing young people brought around and I was winning souls. Being part of this wonderful group focused on saving our generation was a blast.

I noticed how settled people were in church. A dad had his arm around his child in the pew. No, it wasn't in some movie on television; they were right in front of me. I had been so burned out that even as a Christian I was emotionally miserable. Who knew there were happy people left in the world? I realized how far I had fallen in several years on drugs and became even more determined to completely straighten out.

In early 1973 God called me to be a missionary. Our pastor Chuck had spoken in the pulpit about missionary opportunities, encouraging us to get involved while we were still young and independent. It went in one ear and out the other. I had no idea

what a missionary was. Then one day God's calling hit me like a bright light.

Since I had been so stoned for several years it took me that same amount of time to recuperate. I was working in a factory and very depressed, feeling blue, *dark* blue, when suddenly Pastor Chuck's words came to me: Be a missionary! My soul was set free. Out of the blue I felt I could go anywhere the Lord sent me. It could be to Antarctica to preach to the penguins. I didn't know how I could get an education to get ready or learn another language for where God would send me but I felt I could do anything. God is looking for a fully surrendered heart when He calls someone to serve.

My job would be to reach one soul at a time the way Omni House had saved me. I decided to phone Pastor Chuck and say I was ready to go to the mission field. All that day the idea stayed with me, but if you lived at Omni House you didn't call Chuck on his day off, Thursday. If the place burned down, you called the next day. So I planned to call him the following evening after work. All Friday a special sense of the Lord's light was with me. I came home with every intention of calling Chuck after dinner but before I could finish eating the phone rang. The first thing Chuck said was, "Kyle, pack your bags; you are coming with me tonight." I never spent another night at Omni House.

Chuck took me outside of town to fill in at a home for delinquent and troubled teenagers. Besides ministering at church and running the halfway house, Chuck was on the board of Victoria Youth Home. The college student living in the boy's dormitory had suddenly quit and I got his job. Right here in America God was giving me this mission. I didn't have to go to school or learn another language after all!

Home was a big house with a four-car garage on nine acres. I worked there for six months and went from part- to full-time. The couple who ran the home went to our church. They helped me a great deal; they were great. They gave me a car to drive, anywhere

I wanted, but I was content to stick around and play with the kids. That was my job. They let me take time off anytime because I seldom went anywhere else. I drove kids to elementary school, came back for the junior high run and then did the senior high route. The meals were fabulous (I gained weight), laundry and ironing were done for me by the girls, and my room was cleaned every week. I was free to talk with the kids about Jesus and we took them to church three times a week.

One morning they told me to go back over to the high school to drive one of the boys home because he was sick. He was a big seventeen year old Texan. On the way back I suggested we stop at Omni House to check on things. We visited with a couple of my buddies for a while. I thought that might impress him. When we left there we drove by a McDonald's. We stopped for a couple Quarter Pounders with cheese and had a nice talk. After we swallowed down the burgers I asked if he felt better. He said he did. I said he looked fine to me and asked if he was ready to go back to school and finish the day. What could he say? So I drove him back to school.

Later that year God put me to work in the woods of Washington State as a counselor in another Christian boy's home. We averaged about twenty teenage boys. On weekends home in Seattle I went after my old friends and my whole family to win them over. I drove around town looking for hitchhikers to pick up so I could witness to them. People were friendly and listened.

"Where are you going?" I'd ask and they would ask where I was going. "I'm just driving, so tell me where you're headed." Crossing the city I told them about Jesus. On the entrance ramp there would be another hitchhiker going back. I was fully engrossed in battling America's most threatening social problem, drug addiction.

Although it had been nearly two years since quitting drugs and meeting Jesus my mind was not totally healed. Slowly the old feelings and old places in Seattle snuck up and got to me. I became severely depressed. Winter was coming to the Northwest and the

days were getting darker. I was discouraged with the kids and even the staff at the boys' home. That is when I decided to take some time on my own.

I drove back to Victoria, Texas as fast as my old '60 Dodge could go. First day back, Richard told me to get a hold of myself. God blessed me that evening in the Thanksgiving service at church.

Jesus led me to Maranatha Bible Church in San Antonio. I got a job pumping gas during the gas shortage, late 1973 thru January 1975. I had a small apartment, the old Dodge and a few belongings. I had no television or telephone but I had a radio and a Gospel station, KDRY. I spent a year in intensive prayer and Bible study. The time alone with God turned out to be invaluable, reading my Bible every day and joining this tiny dynamite church. These devoted Christians were a great part to me.

When I joined Maranatha a guy named Pat took me out to lunch after worship. He was my age, twenty two, a young deacon destined to be a pastor. "What do you want to do in the church?" he asked. I didn't know what he meant, thought he was suspicious. "Have you been thinking about how you would like to serve the Lord here?"

I had been dreaming of a home fellowship, not just a Bible study and not just a prayer meeting, but a time of talking about what Jesus was presently doing in our lives. I envisioned a setting where we could draw closer than ever to Jesus. We would share the Scriptures with one another, fresh passages where the Holy Spirit was speaking to us, and we would share prayer requests and needs in a way that told how God was moving in our lives that week. Pat brought people together to make it happen. We had hours of joy in the love of Jesus like none of us had seen and we felt very close to God.

Simultaneously, Pastor Bill Whitten began to teach the Scriptures concerning the body of Christ and our ministry one to another. He started leading us through the book, *Body Life*, by Ray Steadman. We got real honest in church and in our homes. It became clear

that we were willing to speak about some of our troubles and faults, but only so far. In this deeper fellowship we applied ourselves to challenge sensitive areas.

At my apartment, alone, I personally had powerful times of prayer and reading. There I began to note what I was seeing in God's love. At the same time my mind was still recovering from the drugs. Terrible bouts of vicious anxiety would overcome me. I had to hang on to the walls until the turbulence passed. A calming followed and then tremendous peace. Until the Lord Jesus moved, that was where I would stay.

LOVE FOUND

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

—1 John 4: 7

I have found the love I was looking for in Jesus. How can I put it into words? There in San Antonio in December 1973, I stopped on the above passage. I began to delve into John's thought, "*everyone that loveth is born of God*," and it seemed to say Christians really can love because we know God. How did I fare on this? I was caught. If it seems a believer does not love, does it mean they don't have God, or did I have more to learn? Think about whether normal human beings have this kind of love. It must have power. Is this love on another level? This passage is directed at the relationship one has with God.

I was not satisfied with my own personal development two years after being saved. My interest in *faith* and *love* came out of my failure and desire to give and receive love. Those were lonely days. How could I square my poverty of soul with my glorious position in Christ? I was surprised and disappointed but I didn't want to be disillusioned. I thirsted to see Jesus Christ.

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

—1 John 4: 8

Indeed I lost the old love I had to find the New love I have. By itself this passage might prop up the erroneous notion that naturally kind, loving people have God and naturally they go to Heaven but mean people will definitely not get in. When the Apostle John wrote that *faith* is not real unless there is *love*, then the reverse is also true; *love* is not anything without saving *faith*. Do you think it is fair to say people are incapable of love without God? An unregenerate soul cannot love any more than sin can ever be compatible with righteousness. Am I right to say I know God in Jesus if I do not love? It is as if we build a bridge starting from both sides of a river but the two halves do not meet in the middle. How do we close that gap? Christians don't love 100%. The impasse I saw in this passage was my first clue to a higher love. I wanted this.

Here is my hypothesis: **Since we are righteous in Christ we have perfect love.** We say it as a fact but take it by faith. I began to map biblical support to prove the corollary of the above proposition: **Sinners saved by grace do know God and therefore can love.** It took two more years to develop the thesis of "*faith and love*" then over thirty years to write it out. A greater-than-your-everyday-kind-of-love is feasible. You and I can see that Christians do not appropriate all of God's available love.

The double messages heard in church pit the Lord's justice against His kind love. Honest, God's great might is powerfully shown in His love. We tear down walls and every stronghold that comes against God because our spiritual weapons are that strong.

Is it not so obvious the way God's love works with our faith? Jesus loves and now we are able to love through Him. "*He also has made us able ministers of the New Testament,*" 2 Corinthians 3: 6. Then can we realize the awesome potential of our relationships with one

another? As you will find, *love with faith* gives us the facility to see and touch our perfect relationship with God and reflect this.

No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

—1 John 4: 12

The word “perfected” means complete; our *faith* is incomplete without *love*. Joining *faith* with *love* is not the way friends usually put it, yet instinctively they understand this truth. This amazing promise is that we are granted God’s love so we see Him at work. “*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us.*”

I heard a famous guitar player say what he felt was the sign of a good song. I had not thought about it before but agreed right away when he said, “A good song sounds familiar the first time you hear it.” None of us can explain love but we know it when we see it, and even though we have love in our hearts, we don’t really express it enough. *Love needs faith* to live out loud in Jesus Christ.

Love doesn’t ever have to fail, but living the ideal model in a fallen world is hard. As a beautiful song played well on an out-of-tune instrument does not sound good, practically speaking; love does not fit in this sinful world. Disappointed people feel love is unworkable or unrealistic. Even if we do love right we’re not perfect so we need faith. “*But with God, all things are possible,*” Matt. 19: 26. God’s Word begs for verification. The good Lord wants us to prove Him right. *Love never has to fail.*

Something in us must be repaired to allow for love to work, but you and I know also that in every respect the human race and all creation are broken beyond repair. So if we were to get love right could our *born again caring* be of help in a fallen world? The creation is corrupted. The children of God and all Creation wait with earnest expectation to one day experience glorious liberty. This promise, Romans 8: 19 & 21; puts solid hope into our theory,

even though love is not specifically mentioned here it cannot be overlooked. In the verses which follow, Romans 8: 28, 35, 37 & 39; note the substantial emphasis each time on the word *love* which demonstrates our overall security in God's unending care. The classic definition says love is unconditional, i.e. *love with faith*. God's love does great things as it transcends all conditions.

Any time someone comes to true *faith* in the name of Jesus they receive salvation. We begin by believing. Our aim is to start in *faith* and draw straight to the goal of *love*. Our *love* is acceptable to God accompanied by—actually transformed by—*faith*. Others are looking for good examples to follow. Yes, Christians are going to Heaven; but here we live for the purpose of revealing salvation by making *love with faith* true in our lives.

Love is elusive for unbelievers, okay, but how quickly love can be swept away from Christians. Shouldn't you and I together apply our *faith* to display God's *love*? Here is the biblical principle of *faith* and *love*: While we don't function flawlessly this side of Heaven we still trust that God is at work in our life. Lost love is not all lost for us. God has it all and all along we have needed to believe it.

The very greatest thing God will ever do, ever, is love us when we are sinners. Many times though, believers give the impression of condemnation, condescension or damnation. Rejection and ridicule make people afraid and unresponsive. There is a lot we learn in church that would be better unlearned. We want a complete love, one which goes beyond the call of duty, above what is expected, to heal the broken hearted and to restore the wounded. We have the mind of Christ yet cannot see except by his guidance.

From my conversion I thought any person who got saved would be apt to grow in the love of God, as I was hoping, but apparently not. The natural thing for us is to walk in the flesh. The moment I put my faith in God's Spirit, I received Jesus with the signature of the Father's glorious love. To walk in His Holy Spirit is then again a step of faith. It is incredibly easy. How come I falter?

You and I cannot love without God and so we need to know God to know love. How would you prove this hypothesis theologically? People think love is scarce because it's so hard to find. We've been told love has to be earned or bought. Some think you should do something better with your money than give it away. Love is as difficult as it sounds, especially in this day and age. Countless misconceptions about love confuse us.

In early 1975 a release came to my soul as the Lord directed me home to Seattle. This time I found a good church and regular work, and I kept reaching out to the lost generation from which I had come. With a telephone and a car you can do a lot. Soon I had a lovely wife and a dear baby. Seattle is not famous for Christianity so it has been good and bad, but there have been plenty of victories for Jesus.

I got calls at all hours. People were needy and wanted someone to talk to. The experimental trends of the Sixties created turmoil. It was the decade of change. Alright, but it wasn't until these new customs became rooted in themselves that the altered mores impacted our American way of life and this societal breakdown institutionalized in the Seventies. One and all began consciously searching for answers and many were calling for help.

My habit was to attend church regularly, always inviting someone. I prayed to bring people around and God was faithful. Sunday school and morning worship, Sunday evenings and midweek meetings were times to grow, to bring different friends and to add to the church. I went to home Bible studies Monday, Tuesday and Friday. I was told about a discussion in our Christian Education Department where a teacher reported that Kyle always came to home Bible study with someone new and another teacher said, "That's funny, he always comes to my study with someone new." Then they all reported the same story!

It was not always easy though to get others on board with Jesus. How could I tell people they were sinners going to hell and

expect them to stop and listen to me? One evening a long-haired hitchhiker jumped into my car and as we rode along he told me how stoned he was. I said that I used to get loaded but that now I had given my life to Jesus. Then I told him I was coming back from a marvelous day out in the country and was enjoying the summer evening drive home. He quickly changed the subject back and said, "Tell me more about Jesus." So I did. After telling him all, I dropped him off on the other side of downtown and thanked him for listening. The man leaned down and looked into the car, his face shining. "I was listening," he said.

We must prepare to help in practical ways to open the door for Jesus. You and I find God's heart by seeing His original intention breathed into Scripture. We begin by taking the Bible as it is, not a literal interpretation but a literal reading. How can we say what the words means until we see how they read? Only then can we sensibly decide and best describe what God's words declare and not until then do we apply them personally.

Just as love completes faith, acts of faith complete words of love. Can my words lead my life or am I weak? Is your heart like your eyes, closed when you speak? When we put our faith in Jesus we need to trust Him and keep our hearts wide open to Him.

FROM DOUBTING MINDS TO FAITHFUL HEARTS

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him,

—John 7: 38 NIV

God wants us to take people with doubting minds and give them faithful hearts. We are called to speak from our faithful heart to the doubting mind.

You and I must move within ourselves. As rivers flow through a land, faith leaves what is certain, the well-known, to cross into the unknown. To go from point A to point B we must grow in our

thinking. Life in Jesus brings us victory over sin and He takes our love from start to finish, to do the unfeasible and to reach even the unreachable. God has the best way to pursue this greatest endeavor with the blessing of *love by faith* in Christ.

This world fades and passes while the wisdom of God is wonderfully constant. The course of time is inevitable; it sends us on a straight line into the future. We resist life psychologically and struggle physically. Would you feel more secure at the thought of reliving your days, for instance in the familiarity of old experiences, rather than risking the assumed dangers of new days? Time does not run in a loop. I've felt enough pain. Don't we want to escape? Faith hopes for a day of perfection with God.

Some people have to hit rock bottom before they look up to the Heavenly Father. Maybe you have heard that when you hit bottom the only way to look is up. There are those who seem to be at their lowest point but then, in their big "breakthrough" they somehow break through the bottom and fall to even deeper depths of darkness.

How we believe determines how we live. Unfortunately, there are those whose unbelief determines how they live. People who hold the "unbelief system" of Darwinism are guided by the implausible premise of "natural selection" or "survival of the fittest." They gravitate toward those who rate higher in favorable characteristics.

These unbelievers are looking out for themselves. They are number one. So they only tolerate those who suit their purposes or meet their approval. This morally bankrupt mindset explains the reasoning behind worldly ambition and aggression or, in others, depression and regression. It is a lonely world if you are the only person in it.

Ideally Christians should continually feel and reflect God's good *love by faith*. Are you dependable or does your faith waver? Natural feelings will fluctuate between optimism and discouragement.

Lots of doubts come when we hide sin and we know that. I test myself; is mine a *pure version* of Christianity or a *perversion*? You wait for unbelievers to see you are a *Christian* but maybe they look and think you are a *Question*. A stronger belief in God reverses the wrong direction in our lives and leads us on.

Various Christians I talk with have seen God only as The Ruler. Some people see Him as a tyrant. They can meet God personally as a friend! Christians can be saved for years never feeling the warm security of God's love. Some will tell you they have heard it all their life when actually all their life their ears have been shut. I pray for God's Holy Spirit in me to reach them.

Sincere faith sees fulfillment in Jesus by serving, sharing, and winning others. We aid the needy. *Love flows out of our heart like a river of living water*. The atheist thirsts for what you have.

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring; And they shall spring up as among the grass, like willows by the water courses.

—Isaiah 44: 3 & 4

This old dry world drives every temptation and pushes every destructive thought. Prayerful Christians bring clean fresh water *in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is*. We need to keep the faith, *think about things that are lovely and true* and always lift up the hope. Many marvelous things were only an indistinct prophecy in the Old Testament so let's not ignore that Jesus came to reveal a whole New view of righteousness.

I pray to God for His divine help in giving witness to this hope in salvation. Please don't miss the subtle import of this message of *faith* and *love*. If there is no prayer there is no answer. I tell my side of it and people may not get a better explanation.

One lunch break at work a friend told me he knew more about religion than I did. In so many words he said I was close-minded. He said that Christians stereotype others and if I got smart I would see that all religions are the same. He was nearly insulting. Realizing my lunch was eaten, I saw it was time to go.

“All religions are the same, except Christianity,” I said as I got up from the table. My lunch time was over.

“How is it any different?” he scoffed.

So I told him, “Every other religion tells you that you have to be good enough to get into Heaven, but Christianity teaches that salvation is offered for free if we will simply believe and receive it.”

“Well, you believe you have to be good.”

“No,” I insisted, “Why do you think Jesus died on the cross for our sins? You and I could never be good enough to please God so Jesus paid the penalty for us and all He asks is for you to accept His forgiveness.”

Now here’s a guy who grew up in a small town in the south with plenty of churches in the community. He had traveled the world over, but you should have seen his mouth drop open. Looking right up at me, seemingly astonished he asked, “Is that what you really believe?”

I assured him I did most definitely. So then he asked, “You believe you have to be baptized, don’t you?”

Again I said, “No, we get baptized after we are saved to show what has already taken place.”

“Then you believe don’t you, that you could do something bad and lose your salvation and end up in hell?” He had heard that.

I told him that this was not true. “If I did nothing good to receive God’s grace and forgiveness, then nothing I do can separate me from Him.”

The tension that I felt building at first was gone. My friend had not heard the good news of Jesus explained this way and he was taken aback by it. On top of this, at work I had been praying that

my actions would speak louder than words. It is wonderful to have the ear of a lost soul to speak these living words to.

My first goal is to find a way to let people know I am a real genuine Christian. Then I hope to explain the central truth of the Gospel, not getting sidetracked by issues, opinions or tangents. If I don't get agreement with people I'm still blessed if they listen enough to catch the idea. Maybe it's their first time or maybe they have heard it before without paying attention.

Complete repentance and a desire to live a holy life will allow us to willingly get what God's Word says, to accomplish it and to reflect it more perfectly. Not in our misconceptions or from our upbringing, nor from society or what people say; our beliefs about love should be based on the Bible. Many professing Christians differ greatly in their views of doctrine. And while we splinter into quibbling factions the culture around us is quickly moving, changing and escaping. Dedicated believers want to be true to Scripture, in agreement and pulling together while remaining relevant to the world.

I offer to you what I have said a few times in front of an adult Sunday school class or a home Bible study group, "A teacher is charged with teaching something you do not know, not just reviewing what you know already. What could I say to you that might be new? More often we do review but by definition teaching imparts more than the student knows." Of course we improve through review, rehearsal, repetition and drills. We never gain knowledge of a subject better than when we attempt to teach what we know to others. But you would allow that you want to learn something more from a teacher or a book, something new. At times we must unlearn things to learn the new.

Our Bible is the invaluable means for psychological and spiritual inner healing. *The Word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Some people will like this book thoroughly for its psychological input but I hope you will prefer the theological.

The truth cleans out false notions we take for granted and allows individuals to choose (or reject) the Gospel freely. People get ideas stuck in their head which won't come out. What keeps Christians from loving freely? We all have been helped by psychology, the way hospitality softens a soul, but the study of the mind is sometimes powerless to nurture the human will until the Savior comes in and converts the heart. Psychology reforms some people but know that Jesus Christ can truly transform anyone!

Instead of exploring a mysteriously repressed subconscious, we should simply live our best from day to day applying the Bible's good wisdom. Christians who want "pat answers" get stuck where they are, comfortable and expecting a simple life. A shot in the arm or popping a pill may seem to help but cannot bring happiness. Jesus unravels the tangles in our lives and brings peace of mind. Then again, a few people have to first straighten out before they are able to see Jesus, they are so fouled up.

THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY

But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth in it, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

—James 1: 25

We want to be doing what the Lord Jesus wants us to do, but what are we doing? Generally Christians don't know enough about the will of God. Can most of us explain what is *the perfect law of liberty* or do we read too quickly over this phrase, and terms like it, with no real reaction? Let's stop and think about it.

It has taken me so long to better verbalize what Jesus offers us. I could have more easily leaped through my troublesome life. What I see at this point today would have answered my earlier questions and saved me a lot of heartache.

When I first believed it seemed that since my hope was spiritual I had to eliminate all the non spiritual and search for the super spiritual. Now I see that being in Christ, all has become spiritual. Sadly, even from the inside, Christianity is more often portrayed without the unifying dimension of God's divine love so especially from the outside it is perceived as uniformly unlivable.

People thought the Earth was flat until about 500 years ago. History books show pictures of ships sailing to the edge of the ocean where the waters just pour off into space like waterfalls, the ships spilling over. Columbus came fifteen centuries after the time of Christ. That is relatively recent. What else are we still getting wrong? Many Christians cannot define the term the New Testament and how it differs from the Old. This affects our behavior.

We preach good conduct. Don't let anyone fool you into thinking we are not spreading the word on righteousness, a big controversy today. Liberty is taken these days to mean open self-indulgence, hedonism. The *perfect law of liberty* as we have it in the New Testament could not mean that. We are set free from sin by our Savior Jesus Christ.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgeteth what manner of man he was.

—James 1: 23 & 24

The instant you step away from a mirror your image is gone. So it is with anyone who gets into the Bible and immediately forgets what it says. But that is not what this passage is about. It is not about good behavior or if you can take an honest look at yourself in the mirror. Comb your hair, spend time in front of a mirror until you are stunning, but step away your image is gone; just as true talking about your good works. Look again because this passage is specifically about the *perfect law of liberty*.

The Book of James has plenty to say about grace. Unfortunately, the classic take on this—hearer and doer—may not yield the better logic of the New Testament. Has the doing occurred if the hearer is not listening and believer doesn't see? Verses 23 and 24 of James Chapter One must be read in context with verse 25 to be consistent with the order of the passage. What it takes to obey the *perfect law of liberty* is to act out of the grace in Christ. Or do we walk in our own strength and value our self righteousness? Can we try to keep the Old Law of Moses? Anything we do apart from the grace of Jesus Christ is a sin.

Then James says the “religious” don't express grace exactly but they deceive their own hearts. “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*” James 1: 27. Right here he says, in keeping the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, be *fair* to everyone. To abide with God who is *no respecter of persons* is to be the respecter of all.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

—James 2: 12

We are going to be judged in eternity by the Almighty God of Heaven, but judged by a New Law, “*the law of liberty.*” Have enough people we are acquainted with heard about this? The same law that judges us now also frees us from the *Law of sin and death* in order to make us able to love. How well do we convey the grace and love of God? Christian, we hardly make enough news of *this grace* amongst ourselves.

What resides in our heart moves us. Better decisions build up our emotions and our actions. Basically, what we think becomes our attitude. And our attitude affects our behavior. If my various moods change, I relate to people differently. All of it really comes

down to and depends on what each of us is willing to do. Grumpy people may be kind at times and in bad situations even nice folks can act mean. If we have a rough day we get irritable and when good things happen we quickly turn friendlier but with love we can stay courageous and constant.

Life would be fine if everyone were in a good mood all the time. How much of the negativity is of our own doing? We have troubled thoughts at times with no probable cause and something as little as a cold virus may put us into a depressed state of mind. A young guy can feel down any time because he is a teenager. And as he is a teenager, he is tweaked when a cute girl smiles and talks nicely to him—bang bingo!—the whole world becomes a budding garden. (This can happen when a guy is ninety, as well!) What does it matter to a young guy who has a cold when everything is made better by a small kindness from a pretty girl in his first class? We should consciously tell ourselves lots of good and lovely thoughts to perk up.

Change is hard, but life is a lot harder if we do not grow and mature. How much of your life have you outgrown? Some things have to be left in the past. If Christ is in your heart, He will transform your character. Love becomes much easier with Jesus living inside because He takes our heavy burdens and lightens the load.

You may not believe in your ability to change or to help others change. Pity those who are stubborn. Can just anybody change their outlook? If you can't move you are dead. God has written in the Bible about emerging, going, growing and maturing. Scripture consistently commands everyone to change or die; repent and live.

Instead of changing the stuff you don't like in your world, lend yourself to faith and modify your old entrenched mentality. Get your own disposition reshaped. What if the world isn't changing? You can improve your thinking. Things will look better.

When my wife first attended college, she felt really turned around. Have you found yourself in a new location where it took a while to get your sense of direction? Where she went to school the mountains (hills really!) run east and west but on both sides of Seattle the mountains run north and south. At school she had to remind herself every time she looked at the mountains that she was looking north not east or west.

More recently we visited a beautiful home on the shores of Whidbey Island in north Puget Sound. Though I'd driven this route several times, coming north from Seattle then west on a winding highway, I wrongly assumed we had crossed the Deception Pass Bridge from east to west but it was north and south. The place where we stayed was just beyond the bridge on the right. Standing on the beach I assumed we were looking north but the sun was setting on the horizon straight ahead! You may think you know how people are, how things should go, but your point of reference may be way off.

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

—1 Corinthians 8: 9

This verse is to be read, not passed over; one must look closely to what *liberty* is. What is this *liberty*? We receive and relay a lot of disapproval in our daily life, especially if drawbacks are our focus. Can anyone get free of that? Don't be afraid to love. There comes a lot of temptation. Let's get free of that. You may not see yourself as a roving sinner but do you tend to be controlling, trying to get things so correct and right that you want to run other people's lives? That is wrong. We should be developing ourselves individually and as churches, helping others to do better and helping Christianity as a whole to reach out. Do your feelings, "*become a stumbling block to them that are weak,*" because you either discourage people or you encourage them?

In Jesus Christ our Savior we have been set free to change, not to sin but to love. A widow I know got a knock on the door of her new apartment. A stranger was standing there with a microwave oven to give her saying someone else was moving out. No thanks were expected she was assured because it now belonged to her. She said it was extremely helpful to her more than anyone could guess. What a big difference from the stories we hear of rotten thieves who come to steal even when people are in their homes. We need to hear more good stories like this one.

For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

—Galatians 5: 13

Do we realize how much we can really love now that we have become Christians? We are not bound to sin any longer. Yes, we are going to sin, and we do, but we don't have to. Let sin be restrained, your love be unrestrained. And we are going to love. We are bound to love. It is a law. Specifically, since Jesus rose from the dead it is at present the New Law, "*the law of liberty*." James stated it clearly and the Apostle Paul most definitely: "*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of things, in which are some things hard to understand, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*" 2 Peter 3: 16. So beware and care.

If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.

—James 2: 8

Anybody can easily read right by lines like these and miss or forget what they say. I walk away from a mirror and my image is gone. If I hold onto what the Bible says and do it then I become

like Christ. I have learned that love is much easier than I used to make it. When we see afresh through God's eyes we can even love those who bother us.

Greet them that love us in the faith.

—Titus 3: 15

This is the only verse I have seen where this phrase appears. Exactly what does “love us in the faith” imply? It means that with you and me in Jesus “the faith” is inherent in love and this doctrine to which we together give assent is known as “the faith” for instance in Ephesians 4: 5 & 13. You will agree; love and salvation are inseparable. Some have said to me, “But that goes without saying,” and unfortunately it does go without saying. We will achieve true spirituality by placing our love in God's hands by faith.

Even as we make regular decisions in ordinary ways Christians live by faith. Still we find failure in our lives. Our love may be right and we do the right things, but why is it we come out wrong? Maybe you are doing something or other wrong that has to change. Is your love connecting with others? If you have been holding an understanding of Christianity in another way, please pray to see this as the New precept, *faith* combines with *love*.

The whole planet is at our door-step with today's “information age,” but much of the world is still unacquainted with the Gospel. Let's bring a true clarity to the theology of *love* and *faith* to do well for our Maker and for our neighbor. Billions live in darkness either under various forms of tyranny or license to sin. Either way sin brings bondage. False religions can dominate many while numbers of people shun all forms of religion. Let's see the new millennium as an opportune time for evangelism.

The budding church of the first century spread faith powerfully with the use of the Roman Empire's extensive roads and complex mail system. Later the Reformation coincided with both the

Renaissance and the discovery of the New World. Christopher Columbus was born in 1446, Michelangelo in 1475 and Martin Luther in 1483. And Johann Guttenberg, who died in 1468, was the first European to print with movable type. The Guttenberg Bible was tremendously significant with its accurate reproduction of Scripture enabling the education of common folk.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the grace of God— Not of works, lest any man should boast.

—Galatians 2: 8 & 9

For hundreds of years now the Protestant message has primarily focused on the Biblical plan of salvation by faith. Great men have arisen to announce that faith alone saves thanks to the redemption gained at the cross. The sinner has direct access to God in a personal relationship inspiring followers to lead a righteous life. Faith spelled revival. The word Protestant came from the new “protest” movement. They broke with official Catholic doctrine which insisted that God required faith plus good works to enter Heaven. Grace became the code word, freeing us from all erroneous forms of self-effort.

Just as kings and countries were a necessary part of the storyline of the Bible so we believe Providence prompted Protestantism. European Christians reconsidered faith just as the New World was explored. We know that faith found a place. Should anyone underestimate the impact of religious history on world history? Likewise, geopolitical changes and modern innovation play this roll today in the ongoing work of the Church.

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on the earth?”

—Luke 18: 8

There may well be a day when we cannot convert another, the work of the church is done and Jesus will come. That is not now! Will Jesus come at a time when millions are being won? WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT POTENTIAL LIES IN OUR FUTURE.

Billions go from cradle to grave in spiritual blindness without life in Jesus Christ. As the standard of living goes up do folks feel a need for Jesus? Self-sufficiency spells the ruin of many a soul. Does faith alone sway anyone? We need the truer deeds of love.

By the end of the Twentieth Century though, the Reformation was pronounced finished and not only by critics but by Bible-believing leaders who witnessed deadly demoralizing weaknesses in the Church. I hear the movement is over, faith is waning, and the end is coming. Has the Church ever been what it should be? Everyone should know that the Word of Jesus Christ will go throughout the world before the end comes.

Post Protestant prognosticators unfortunately are changing the meaning of faith. Don't let them redefine us; defend the faith. Let's add to our faith more than ever now to stay sharp. Is the hill we are on getting steeper, the climb harder and is time pressing tighter? No, the best is saved for last. A few are saying the end is near and act as if all the better work is behind us, as if things are already determined. Is faith disappearing? You and I must increase in the work of Christ!

Protestants' higher view of individual identity and personal responsibility has brought political freedom and continues to do so to increasing numbers here in our time. Huge populations of atheist communists have traded institutionalized forced labor for a labor force of astonishing successful free enterprise. In a big part of the world American ideas are often perceived as Christian. The more sophisticated governments are now opening borders to global Christian relief organizations and some unlikely officials are inviting missionaries to plant churches or to open schools. In a remarkably short time the information age has circumnavigated the

Earth. International economics has fueled financial philanthropy and amazingly modern methods are now enabling *the Church* to finally fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

The Old Testament Commandments spelled strict punishment for transgressions. It came with the real threat of God's vengeance. In the New Testament God's genuine concern comes closer to each and every person. His wisdom will instruct us so we won't get hurt, so we won't hurt others or hurt ourselves. God is trying to warn us away from sin and steer us into righteousness to save us to give us life. He is on our side. His love is vitalized in the power of Christ's resurrection. I hope you appreciate my heart's desire.

1 John 4: 11–16

*Dear friends,
since God so loved us,
we also ought to love
one another.
No one has seen God;
but if we love one another,
God lives in us
and his love is made complete
in us.
We know that we live in him
and he in us,
because he has given us of his
Spirit.
And we have seen and testify
that the Father has sent his
Son
to be the Savior of the world.
If anyone acknowledges that
Jesus
is the Son of God,
God lives in him and he in
God.
And so we know and rely
on the love
God has for us.
God is love.
Whoever lives in love
lives in God,
and
God in him.*