

Questions or comments are welcomed.

PATHWAY OF LIGHT STUDY COURSE

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“But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov 4:18)

**“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
John 13:35 (KJV)**

Study 10, Chapter 3

Before we conclude our study on the subject of love, we will want to consider the special love that Yahshua said would characterize His true followers. But first let's consider some more of what 1 Corinthians 13 tells us are the features of true love.

Returning to verse 5, we read that love “does not behave itself unseemly”. What does this mean? Well, for one thing it follows right after the statement that “love ... is not puffed up.” I believe that one thing meant by this is that a person with true love does not seek to “call attention to” himself or herself. Those who have true love keep their own attention on Yahweh and others, and are not self-centered. Therefore, they do not “act up” and make a display or show of themselves by purposely acting and in a manner that makes them the center of attention.

Those who operate in true love are careful to not make any remarks, or do anything, that they think might bring hurt feelings or embarrassment to others or dishonor to Yahweh. This can affect the matter of what and how they speak, how they dress, and how they in general conduct their lives. In fact, the word translated “unseemly” is a Greek word that is used in the noun form in Romans 1:27, which (when talking of immoral, homosexual acts) speaks of, “men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” This noun form of the word “unseemly” is translated “shame” in Rev 16:15, which says, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” In the verb form it means to “behave self in an unbecoming manner”. So, once again, love does not behave itself in an unbecoming manner, that is, in a manner that attracts attention to self by way of action or speech.

This is followed by the statement that love “seeks not her own”. There is a definite connection between this and what precedes it. However, this statement goes further than just not acting (by word or deed) in a shameful, or unbecoming, manner. As I have already emphasized, this is central to the matter of having true love, for love is very unselfish (selfishness being the opposite of love). Love not seeking not her own means just that, that a person with true love does not have a life that is centered on

satisfying his or her own self, but is concerned about pleasing Yahweh first and, then, others with self merely being part of the overall good love seeks to promote. I have said enough about this already in the initial explanation of what love is. In consideration of this central element of love, however, I will quote Phil 2:3-5: “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Yahshua Messiah.” Yahshua Messiah is truly our supreme example of this selfless kind of love-life we are to live.

Next, we read that love “is not easily provoked”. Actually the two words “easily provoked” are translated from only one word in the Greek – “paroxuno”. It is a word that merely means “provoked” or “exasperated” without having a word for “easily”. So what Paul is saying is that love is not “provoked”. Yet, the only other place this verb form is used in the New Testament writings is when we read that Paul himself was “provoked” or “exasperated”. We read in Acts 17:16, “Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols.” (NASB) In other words he became “exasperated” or “incensed” at idolatry of that the heathen city. Also in the Septuagint – a Greek translation of the Hebrew Tenach - this verb is used of Yahweh being provoked, or exasperated with Israel because of their sins and unbelief. So it obviously is not wrong to be provoked, or to get exasperated about certain conduct that we see.

I believe that Yahshua was clearly provoked to anger at the moneychangers in the temple, because of their making what was considered to be Yahweh’s house of prayer for all nations into “a den of thieves”. I believe He is also provoked today by many preachers and “TV evangelists” who live high on the hog from the money they receive from their followers. Yahshua was very clear in saying that “the laborer is worthy of his hire”, as we read in Luke 10:7. (Also see 1 Tim 5:18.) But that is not the same as living a high style, worldly goods, aggrandized life style.

So considering all these things it does seem that the idea expressed in 1 Cor. 13:5 is that “love is not easily provoked”, as found in the King James translation, even though the actual word “easily” is not there. Yahweh Himself, who became provoked with Israel was very patient with them and put up with a lot from them before He was provoked to expressing His anger. Thus it seems like this is another way of expressing what was said in the positive statement “love is long suffering”. Love does not always and immediately give in to its human emotions by becoming easily or quickly angered. But when it sees it is actually called for, love will allow itself to respond appropriately with justifiable and proper anger.

This is why one of the requirements one must have to be an overseer is “not soon angry” as we read in Titus 1:7. Anyone who is often and/or easily angered is not qualified to be a leader of the people. A true leader should have much peacefulness about Him and a temper that is under control. But he should also know when it is proper to express anger.

Thus this statement “love is not provoked”, in verse 5, just reinforces the idea of being long suffering, the idea of putting up with a lot until you decide it is appropriate to respond in anger. Considering all that the scripture teaches on this subject, I believe we are being taught here in summary form that love does not allow little personal disturbances to bother it, and does not allow itself to get upset with people easily so as to respond in anger. But, nevertheless, it does at times choose to show its provocation by proper expression of anger when such is justly called for.

The next thing about love mentioned in this “love chapter” is that love “thinks no evil”. There are many ways that this can be applied. One translation in keeping with the meaning of the Greek words used is Young’s Literal Translation (YLT). It translates this as, “does not impute evil.” Putting this in the positive form we would say that love “puts the best possible construct on things” said or done by others. Love imputes good, not evil or bad, motives to others whenever it is reasonably possible to do so.

It is not that love is naïve and lacking in due caution in dealing with others, but that it does not look on others with suspicion and fear. Some people are so suspicious that they think everyone is out to get them. That is an extremely selfish, unloving condition of mind. Love, then, is not paranoid, but, as said, puts a good construction on everything.

Also, because it “thinks no evil”, love is not pessimistic about life in general. Thus optimism is a trait of true love. When we know the truth, that Yahweh “works all things together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose” (as is stated in Romans 8:28) we have good reason to not think evil, negative, thoughts about life in general, but to think very positively. In fact, only the true follower of Yahweh has good reason to be a true optimist since Yahweh is in control and works everything together for good to those who love and follow Him, whereas the unbeliever has not such promise, but only the expectation of future judgment.

When we realize that the purpose He has called us for, and that He uses everything of life to bring us to, is to be “conformed to the image of His Son”, as that passage in Romans continues to point out, then have no reason at all to be pessimistic, but every reason to think only good about life in general. It’s no wonder, then, that Paul, who suffered immense pain and hardship in his life could write, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” He saw that everything was being used of Yahweh to bring us into that glorious condition of becoming made into the fullness of the image of His only begotten, perfect Son Yahshua the Messiah. His one personal goal in line with the will of Yahweh was to know Yahshua the Messiah in personal experience. Thus, instead of thinking evil, pessimistic thoughts he was able to write, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Rom 8:18 (KJV)

We cannot have true love if we do not have real faith in Yahweh - in His goodness, His love, and His power. But if we do have real love, which includes such faith in Yahweh through Yahshua, we will guard our thoughts. We will be “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of Yahweh, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Messiah”, as we read in 2 Cor. 10:5. In other words, we will control our thoughts and make them to line up with the knowledge we have of Yahweh’s great love and power. Finally, then, if we have true love, we will heed what Paul also writes in Phil 4:8, which says, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” We can indeed do that, because “love thinks no evil”.

Next, we read that love, “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth”. It is a simple matter that when we truly choose as our ultimate choice in life the promotion of the greatest well being of the universe, the greatest possible happiness, we automatically will want to see things done right. This is not true of all men, not even of all who even go so far as to “bestow all their goods to feed the poor”. Some who do such, and are known as great, benevolent people in the sight of many not only have many personal vices, but rejoice in immoral behavior in others. But true love, since it begins with choosing the will of our Creator first, always wants to see things done right according to His expressed will in the Bible.

Notice that unrighteousness here, as in other places, is contrasted with “the truth”. It is not just “in truth”, but “in the truth”. The truth as used here refers to the entire body of proper moral conduct. It is truth not just in an academic sense of proper intellectual understanding of facts, but truth in conduct or action.

Next, we read that love, “Bears all things, believes, all things, hopes all thing, endures all things.” Without going into a detailed examination when we read that love “bears all things”, we can see that this is clearly just a further aspect of being long suffering and not being easily provoked. It “bears all things” in the sense that it puts up with all kinds of guff and abrasive action against itself without ceasing to want the perpetrators to come into a condition where they can be blessed of Yahweh. Yahshua said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Mat 5:44 (KJV) This is love bearing all things.

When it says loves, “believes all things”, it obviously does not mean that love is gullible and naïve so as to accept everything that comes its way. But it means that love puts the best construction possible on each situation. Love is positive and seeks to think well of people and situations wherever the known facts do not clearly indicate it must be otherwise. It is not suspicious and distrustful of people without good cause, but has a healthful outlook giving others the benefit of the doubt. It is better to suffer some loss as a result of being trustful than it is to go around always distrustful and suspicious of every-

one.

In a similar way we read that love, “hopes all things”. Hope is a matter of looking on the future with good expectation. We should take proper precaution in preparing for any bad events we see coming down the line. But, because it does not focus on self, love does not look with gloom and despair at the future. Love is not negative and fearful about what lies ahead, because its focus is on Yahweh and its trust is in Him. This is what Isaiah was talking about in Isaiah 26:3 when by the Holy Spirit he wrote, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusts in thee.” The person with true love looks to Yahweh with the supreme desire for His will or pleasure to be done (and earnestly prays for it to “be done on earth as it is in heaven”). This is the number one desire in the person of true love, the accomplishment of Yahweh’s will. And love trusts that He will accomplish that will, for He has everything in control. Therefore, with true love we have no fear no matter what the immediate, unknown future may hold, for we know that He is sovereign and will allow nothing that He cannot and will not turn around for the ultimate accomplishment of His own will.

This is one reason why the apostle John could write that, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18 (KJV) “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). If you have true love, it has come about due to the fact that you know Yahweh loves you and sent His Son to die for you, that He might forgive your sins and give you everlasting life. And you, therefore, trust your own well being to Him while you focus your attention in life on the will of Yahweh and the good of others, rather than merely on yourself. Since you know He is able to accomplish His will in and through you as you trust Him and seek to do so, you no longer need to be concerned about or fearful of anything.

In other words, since you know that Yahweh is love and His will is to bring about the greatest good possible, since you also choose the greatest good, and since you know that Yahweh is able to accomplish it, you have nothing to fear, nothing about which to be concerned. As the scripture points out, wherever there is fear there is torment such as mental anxiety and turmoil of mind. But as Isaiah wrote, when our mind is focused or “stayed on” Yahweh because we trust in Him (instead of torment or mental and emotional unrest) we have “perfect peace”. We trust in Him knowing that ultimately He will bring everything in line with His will, which is to bring about the greatest good.

True love, therefore, is centered not on self, but on Yahweh and others, while trusting the issues of self to Him. It sees self, not from the standpoint of pride, which exalts self to a place of greater importance than it deserves, but sees personal well being only as one part of the overall good of the universe. It sees Yahweh and His pleasure or gratification as the supreme good, and the good of others, including self, as part of His will and of the greatest ultimate good.

Thus true love is true righteousness and holiness. It is the love that all human beings should have for Yahweh and each other. We are to love all mankind and not want anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance and to be able by the Holy Spirit to live in righteousness, peace and joy forever, just as Yahweh does. But there is also a special kind of love, to a special people that Yahshua speaks of when He says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:35

The special people who are to be the first objects of our love among our fellow humans is the family of Yahweh - the congregation of Yahshua the Messiah. The special kind of love we are to have for them is the same Yahshua had for us.

Galatians 6:10 says, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.” Then it adds, “especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” There should be a special bond between fellow believers. If we are to have love to all men (all mankind) and to fulfill the things taught about love to all, how much more we should have and express love to those who are our brothers and sisters in the faith. The bond between us should be greater than any that exists between us and our natural brothers and sisters, or even mothers and fathers, unless they also are members of this family of Yahweh.

1 John 5:1 says, “Whosoever believes that Yahshua is the Messiah is born of Yah: and every one that loves him that caused to be born loves him also that is born of him.” Thus this love for a special group of people should almost be automatic – something that just comes when we become members of Yahweh’s family through our new birth. If we as true believers have chosen to do the will of the Father, we should have a special love for all others who have the same purpose of doing His will in life.

This is what Yahshua also was speaking of concerning His own relationship to those who do His Father’s will. He said, “Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Mathew 12:48b-50. If natural, human relationships are more important to you than that of your brothers and sisters in Messiah, then, something is seriously wrong.

There are 5 places in the Bible wherein we are told to greet one another with “the kiss of love” or “with a holy kiss”. [Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; and 1 Pet 5:14) In the early congregation this was the practice. It was “Salute [Gk. ‘Embrace’] one another with a holy kiss”. There was no distinction made between rich or poor, bond or slave, male or female. If it was merely speaking of the custom of the general population that was in vogue at the time (as some say) then, it is unlikely that such an emphasis would have needed to be made of doing so. In any case, even if it was the custom for people to greet with a kiss (as it yet is in some countries), since it was confirmed and commanded by the Holy Spirit as something to be done, why was it stopped? Who had the right to change it? Yet somewhere along the line this practice was stopped. Because of carnality, human reasoning tends to go against this practice.

However, if we are going to follow all the scripture, why do the congregations of today not follow this Biblically ordained practice of thus expressing love to each other? We do this in our congregation and would that all Yah's children would seek to walk on a plane of walk that they too would return to this Yah ordained show of love.

That love between the brethren is connected with the new birth is further seen by reading 1 Peter 1:22-23. Peter writes, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of Yahweh, which lives and abides for ever." This love is to be a pure love, proceeding from a purified heart, and it is to be a genuine fervent love, not a perfunctory empty, hypocritical gesture or formality. Its existence as a special love to the brethren should be automatic, but the intensity of that love and its sincere expression is something that obviously needs to be nurtured, starting with making the decision that it will be so. In other words, we must choose to develop good attitudes and strong, good emotions towards each other. Otherwise, it would not be commanded to do so.

When we first come to know Yahweh thorough belief in the good news and acceptance of Yahshua as our Savior and Lord, a love for Him and for our brothers and sisters in Messiah rises in us automatically. But in time both loves can grow lukewarm or cold so that our emotions toward Yahshua, and toward the brethren, may seem to become dulled. Many things can cause this. But just as we are warned in the book of Revelation that Yahshua wants us to rekindle our fire for Him, so Peter writes telling us to have a fervent (Greek, "intense") love for one another. (In fact, Yahshua said we have to be either cold, or hot toward Him. He says He will not accept a lukewarm condition of heart. Rev. 3:16) We are to have a love for Yahweh and for one another whereby our lives center around Him and around each other. This of course is to be driven not by fleshly, natural desires, but by a pure heart that is led by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, this love to a special people, the fellow members of the body of Messiah, is not only to be a fervent love, but also is to be a special type of love. It is to be the same love that Yahshua had for us when He laid down His life for us. We read in 1 John 3:16 we read, "Hereby perceive we the love of the Yahweh, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." We read, "that Yahweh was in Messiah reconciling the world unto Himself." (2 Cor. 5:19) We read about "the congregation of Yahweh, which he hath purchased with his own blood." So it is Yahweh in Yahshua that died for us. It is this type of love that we are to have for one another, the kind whereby we lay down our lives for each other. We are to live for each other and are to be willing to die for each other.

With that kind of love how could we gossip about each other, or cut one another down? How could we turn against each other? How could we just walk away from each other? How could we get angry with each other over minor differences, and not seek earnestly to solve them and even the more major differences that we may have with each other? How could we not be there to help each other when the need arises? Oh how it

must grieve the heart of Yahweh to see what goes on the in many of the congregations and between the various congregations of people who profess to know Him.

People talk about keeping the commandments of Yahweh, and sometimes fight and fuss over which and how. Of course we must strive to do our best to understand the what and how of the Torah, the law of Yahweh, as it relates to the New Covenant believer. Nevertheless, while doing that, we must not neglect to fulfill what is called the new commandment. John speaks of this in 1 John 1:7-11 and throughout his epistle. It is love for our “brother”, our fellow believer in Messiah. It is on the one hand called an old commandment in that it is to love, which has always been the essence of the law and true righteousness. But, on the other hand, it is new in that it is to a special group of people with a special kind of love that originates with the love of Yahweh.

This subject of love is a huge subject. Much more could be said about it. But we will close the subject with these words. Yahshua said, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13) And as our headline verse reads, He said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” John 13:35