

The Virtue of Love

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Rogers, the retired host of a popular children's television show, went to a restaurant and was served by a very irritated waitress.

"Would you like the special?" she asked with a groan.

"Yes, ma'am," he said.

"Would you like coffee with that?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How about a glass of water?"

"Yes, ma'am."

That's how the whole meal went. The waitress would ask a question, and Mr. Rogers would simply reply, "Yes, ma'am"; however, when he was finished, Mr. Rogers left a huge tip that sent the waitress following him out the door.

"Is this all for me?" the waitress asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why?"

"Because I see that you have a need for God's love."

Mr. Rogers led the woman to Christ. She wound up going to his church and being transformed as she responded to the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Before long, she became a great soul winner herself.

That was a demonstration of the greatest kind of love we can show on earth. It revealed a love that looked beyond her fault, to see this woman's need.

As this booklet will show, there is *great* faith, but we can demonstrate the greatest faith. There are great kings, but we serve the greatest King. There is great love, and there is the greatest love—a tremendous difference between the two. This love, which we call virtue love, changes people, but it can never be changed—and it will never be exhausted. This is the love of God.

Chapter One

LOVING AS GOD LOVES

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

“Virtue” is the key in this passage. It is what takes something great and turns it into the greatest. Virtue is the nature of God, which we can express because of His resurrection after Calvary. There is human faith and then there is virtue faith. Human faith is what I think and do in my own mind. Virtue faith is what God thinks and does through me with His mind.

Virtue love never stops loving. Any time we obey God’s Word, which says, “Love one another,” He pours the Holy Spirit into us and does the loving through us (Romans 5:5). Love is not virtue love unless it gives as God gives. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever would believe

would not perish but have everlasting life (see John 3:16). The world of drugs, murderers, homosexuals, adulterers, liars, and thieves is also the world that Jesus Christ died for.

Never Trying to Control

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12).

“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

Virtue love gives, and it also forgives and forgets. I am burdened for people who claim to be born again who do not have virtue love. Virtue love flows into people’s hearts. Virtue love never tries to control people. Virtue love never invades a person’s privacy. Instead, it proclaims the truth and leaves the decision to obey up to the individual.

Virtue love does not seek recognition. Some people are happy if they are recognized, yet they do not have godliness with contentment, which brings virtue rest along with peace that passes human understanding.

Repairing Damaged Goods

Many Christians have experienced a change

in their lives, yet they are still damaged goods. They may have been gloriously healed, yet many have never been liberated. They still carry inward pain from things done to them in the past. There is some sense of relief in them, they do love God, but part of them is still damaged. Each one has been sanctified once and for all through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. But only the deliverance that comes from virtue love can deal with and heal those areas once and for all.

A deacon committed adultery with a girl in his church, and she became pregnant. The girl told the deacon's wife, who went to her bedroom in great emotional pain, as one can only imagine. She stayed there and prayed alone all night.

In the morning, the deacon's wife went to her husband and said, "I forgive you." But that's not the end of the story. They cared for the girl during her pregnancy. Then, the wife and the deacon adopted the child, and the girl moved to the West Coast to start a new life.

That was virtue love in action.

Chapter Two

VIRTUE FAITH ACTIVATES VIRTUE LOVE

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13).

“Charity never fails.” We may fail to fellowship with God’s love, but that love is always there for us because it paid for all of our sins. It never imputes our sins to us. Charity never punishes a Christian for his sins; instead, it disciplines us to bring about peaceable fruits of

righteousness (see Hebrews 12:11).

A man I knew worked in a shipyard. It was very hard work with long hours, and as a single father, he had to hire someone to take care of his four children while he went to work. He was so faithful to all of our church services, and those children were always with him in the nursery or in Sunday school.

One day, his wife, who had left him for a life of drinking and sleeping around, came home with chest pains and sickness. This man forgave her and forgot all of the things she had done to him. She became gloriously saved, and they became one of the great families in our church.

Charity in this man's heart could not stop loving. It could not fail, even in the face of this situation. His compassion and forgiveness was an expression of virtue faith, which many people do not understand. It is a faith that serves by love—virtue love that never quits, no matter what.

Greater Grace is Given

There are people who have gone to hell rejecting the reality of virtue love that God expressed at Calvary. Along the way, they suffered divisions in marriages, families, churches, and

businesses because they rejected something else: virtue grace.

Great grace saves a man, but greater grace is given to the humble while it resists the proud. In the illustrations we have given, these people didn't just have grace—they humbled themselves in receiving greater grace for their situation. They didn't just have the love that saved them, but they revealed the same love for those who failed and became victims of sin.

One woman in our church watched her husband leave her and go to live with another woman for four years. She waited and prayed, never accusing or attacking, never going to anyone to say a negative word. Four years later, after he repented and got right with God, she took the man back and married him again. They have been wonderfully happy ever since. That woman had virtue love, greater grace, and virtue faith.

We are known by our fruit (Matthew 7:16, 20), and spiritual silence is usually evidence of great fruit. These are people who are skilled in conversation, both as listeners and as speakers. They don't talk incessantly and interrupt people in dialogue (Proverbs 18:13). What's more, they don't make careless statements that could hurt

someone.

Virtue love is a message that needs to be heard in churches everywhere. It goes beyond the word "virtue." Virtue love must be learned, experienced, and shared. We need to understand how God can help us receive this love.

This love was judged, condemned, executed, buried, resurrected, and ascended. Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, virtue love cannot judge or remember sin. We are accountable to deal with sin, because it breaks up fellowship; but that is as far as it goes, because sin is no longer the issue. He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son does not have life. The Son is God, and God is virtue love (1 John 5:12).

A Faith That Clings to Love

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:1-2).

Virtue faith believes the truth when it has no encouragement to believe. Abraham believed he would have a son even as he and his wife, Sarah, grew older and older. Virtue faith believes the truth even when it seems to be discouraged by Jesus Christ Himself. In Mark 7:24-30, the Syro-

phenician woman was pleading for her daughter the way a dog begs for crumbs off his master's table. Jesus seemed to dismiss her request. Yet, she persisted and her daughter was healed.

"And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

"And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately.

"And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:45-48).

The woman with the issue of blood spent all of her money on physicians, and none of them could heal her. She sneaked into the crowd following Jesus and pushed her way through—just to touch the hem of His garment by virtue faith. Immediately, virtue love healed her. Virtue love goes out when touched by virtue faith.

Trembling and falling down, this woman came to Jesus because her disease had left her

excommunicated from the community, divorced from her husband, and banned from the synagogue. She was not to have contact with anyone. But she had virtue faith that touched the Savior, and that faith released virtue love to heal when no one else could heal her.

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:7-10).

Richard Wurmbrand spent many years imprisoned in communist Romania. He almost went crazy at times living with rats, fleas, and lice in his cells. There were times when he was repeatedly tortured in freezing rooms, his feet beaten, his body hung upside down, and his

food filled with strange drugs.

At times, Richard Wurmbrand admitted that he would question the reality of Christ and cry out in unbelief. But days later, he would realize, "There is a God, and He loves me with all His heart." He is the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, reviving the spirit of the one who is contrite.

The word "contrite" speaks of a person who has been through so many hardships, pain, and suffering that only love could put him back together. It is a far deeper meaning than being humble. It is the picture of a broken vessel. Smashed into pieces, beyond recognition, the contrite person lets God's love put him back together. He is an empty vessel who allows God to fill him up.

"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed" (2 Kings 4:6).

Chapter Three

GOD'S ADDITIONS SUBTRACT SATAN'S EFFECTS

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:4-8).

It was amazing to sit in a European missions conference in Hungary recently and to realize that the building erected to honor Lenin, a godless atheist and communist, was now a church

filled with Christians glorifying God! Hundreds of people from formerly communist countries now packed out the hall to hear the Glorious Gospel of Christ. Multitudes and multitudes have recognized that their sins have been forgiven and they have been saved from hell, all because we—along with many godly ministries—are doing our part in the Body of Christ in faith obedience.

The Christian life is all about adding to our faith. We begin by receiving great and precious promises from God's Word. And then, giving all diligence, we add to our faith "virtue." Faith that doesn't have the character of God added to it, is a lonely faith. It is a somewhat impotent faith, and it is a faith that grows discouraged.

"Virtue" is something that is resident, residual, and powerful. It is having God's nature flowing out of us just as it flowed out of Jesus. Remember that the virtue love of Christ took Him to Calvary. And anything in our lives that has not been through the Cross is not virtuous.

When a person receives the love of God and gets saved but does not let that love flow out of him, he does not have virtuous love. When we are filled with virtue love, what comes out of us is coming out of the resurrection side of the Cross.

Imagine what a marriage would be like if virtue love went out from the husband to the wife and vice versa. Imagine what a difference could be made in a family if virtue love were allowed to flow.

Covering Transgressions

“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Proverbs 17:9).

By virtue love, our sins have already been judged for us. Virtue love operates by making people accountable in divine order, but it never judges people who fail. There is a godly accountability to restore in love the fallen ones to fellowship.

Let’s say that I heard about someone’s sin tonight. I would go to him alone and never tell anyone about it. Suppose that person did not get right. Then I am to return with someone else and plead with the person to repent. Should he get right, the matter is over, and I must cover the sin for the rest of my life as a manifestation of virtue love.

Operating any other way means I do not have virtue love. It is a beautiful thing to restore someone who has fallen, and then to cover him

for the rest of my life by forgetting everything he has done against me. The children of Israel lost confidence when they remembered their sins. They placed themselves in bondage when they began to dig up the sins they had committed long, long ago. Bondage came upon them because they remembered things that God had forgotten and covered through virtue love (Jeremiah 50:20; Ezekiel 21:24).

Every Mouth Shut

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19).

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

The law was given so that every mouth may be shut because of virtue love. Virtue love must practice virtue forgiveness that forgets and covers perfectly through the Blood of the Lamb (see Psalm 85:2, Psalm 79:8, Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 10:17, and Hebrews 8:12).

“That’s lying,” you may say. Tell God about it. God never looks upon people’s sins. He looks

upon His Son's righteousness, which paid for their sins.

When you live by the law, if you break one commandment, God sees it as if you have broken all ten, which makes you a sinner. And really, just by judging someone else, you did break all Ten Commandments in God's eyes.

If you want to judge someone for his sin, then you have to deal with what God says in James 2:10. It says that if you offend one point of God's law, then you have offended it in all points. Maybe you offend a point that you don't consider to be among your big dirty dozen sins. It doesn't matter: Offend one point of the law and you have broken it all.

Virtue love does the most magnificent thing. It deals with every failure biblically—covering, and covering in every situation. Then, if someone else ever tries to check out what happened, virtue love responds by saying, “No, it never happened.”

Death and the Devil Can Now Have No Effect

“And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partak-

ers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:13-15).

Virtue love caused *all* sins to be condemned in Christ, at the Cross. Then, virtue love covered those sins with the Blood of the Lamb. Now virtue love is seated far, far above at the right hand of the Father. Virtue love cannot accept any accusation from the devil. In fact, virtue love has made the devil powerless. It has also made the old sin nature of none effect, and it removed the sting of death (Romans 6:6; 1 Corinthians 15:56).

Because of what virtue love did on the Cross, death has no more effect, sin has no more effect, and Satan has no more effect. The only way they can appear to have any effect is if we accept his lie. But God is great. He has given us greater grace. But most of all, He has given us the greatest love. He has given us Himself—He has given us virtue love.

CONCLUSION

We know that the Son has come, and He has given us understanding. We know the One who is true and we are in Him, even the Son of God, Jesus Christ (see 1 John 5:20). There are three characteristics that identify a believer's basis for operation: faith, hope, and charity. But the greatest of these is charity.

The greatest grace, the greatest faith, the greatest rest, the greatest obedience has the word "virtue" before it. This is why Peter told us to give all diligence and to add to our "faith" virtue before all the other things are mentioned (2 Peter 1:5).

Glory to God, virtue love has triumphed over all things that do not reflect His glory. Virtue love lets the one who was the most guilty reveal the greatest love (Luke 7:47).

Father, we are so grateful that Your concern for us is not that we "just get by." You have given us Your Best, and now You have given us a way to oper -

*ate with the best faith and the best love. Thank You.
In Jesus' name, Amen.*