

**REACHING FULFILLMENT AS A CHRISTIAN**  
**"Part III: Understanding And Experiencing Godly Brotherly Love"**  
**(1 John 2:5; 3:10-19; 4:9-5:3)**

Introduction: (To show the need for the message...)

(1) In the May 1, 1989 issue of a conservative Christian newspaper, the following advertisement appeared on a full-length page: "Dear Preacher, Please Quit! This is an alarmingly controversial book that has the potential to fuel the most furious debate since the Premillennial vs. Post and Amillennial controversies. Dr. Branson is sure to be hated by some and loved by others..." If this book is going to cause such division amongst God's people, what is this conservative Christian newspaper doing running it in a full-length ad?! After all, Scripture says, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him...(after listing the first six, Solomon adds the seventh, which is...) ...he that soweth discord among the brethren." (Pr. 6:16-19) Why then promote something that God hates in a conservative Christian newspaper?! Better yet, **how do we react with love toward those who seem to enjoy raising division amongst God's people like this?**

(2) In the same paper, a sickening story runs on and on, page after page about the immoral exploits of a nationally known Evangelical pastor in the Midwest. The son duplicates his father, taking his sins with him from church to church. The story of this account is titled, "The Saddest Story We Ever Published!" **What are believers in such churches or denominations where this goes on to do about it?!**

Sure, they knew the Bible verses, the principles and practices of godly marriages, etc. Why, they had just finished praying about their loving commitment to one another! But something was wrong! **How are we supposed to practice Christian love with the unlovable brother or sister in Christ in such a situation?!**

(We turn to the "Need" section of the message...)

***Need:*** "When I trusted in Christ, I came into the comforting family of God's ransomed people. However, when their sins go unbridled, I find that even Christians are difficult to live with, let alone to love! I also let others down with my own lovelessness!! Any ideas?!"

- I. **1 John was written that Christians might be happy, 1 John 1:4.**
- II. **To be happy, one must fellowship with God, 1 John 1:3, and God is a God Who is loving at the very core of His being, 1 John 4:8b!**
- III. **However, God's idea of a fulfilling love is unique as follows:**
  - A. God's love in the Spirit-filled believer has these following qualities as described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a:
    1. A godly, loving believer is patient with others (*makrothumei*, Trench, Syn. of the N.T., p. 198; UBS Gr. N.T., p. 608), v. 4a.
    2. A godly, loving believer is benign (*chraystotays*, Ibid., Trench, p. 233; Ibid., Gr. N.T.) in relationships, not doing harm, v. 4b.
    3. A godly, loving believer is not envious in a way that lets it eat at him unproductively, Ibid., Trench, p. 86ff; Ibid., Gr. N.T.).
    4. A godly, loving believer does not boast, 1 Cor. 13:4c.
    5. A godly, loving believer is not conceited (Arndt & Ging., A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 877; Ibid., Gr. N.T.), 1 Cor. 14:4d.
    6. A godly, loving believer does not behave dishonorably (*aschaymonei*, Ibid., A.&G., p. 118; Ibid., Gr. N.T.), 1 Cor. 13:5a.
    7. A godly, loving believer lets himself be wronged rather than standing for his due rights if it means hurting another believer, v. 5b with 1 Cor. 6:7, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV fn. (1 J. 3:12,16)
    8. A godly, loving believer is not easily irritated by others, (*paroksunetai*, Ibid., A.&G., p. 634; Ibid., Gr. N.T.), v. 5c.
    9. A godly, loving believer does not keep count of wrongs done against him by other believers, Ibid., A.&G., p. 476, v. 5d.
    10. A godly, loving believer does not make light of sin but rejoices together with the godly in righteousness, v. 6 with 1 C. 5:8.
    11. A godly, loving believer keeps the confidences others entrust to him, Ibid., A.&G., p. 773; Ibid., Gr. N.T.), 1 Cor. 13:6a.
    12. A godly, loving believer always trusts another's intentions until proven otherwise, context with 6b's "believes all things."
    13. A godly, loving believer always hopes for another's good, 6c.
  - B. God's love that fulfills the believer who practices it makes him meet the needs of others in terms of actual works, 1 Jn. 3:17-18.
  - C. God's love makes a Christian soak up the negative effects of sin in other Christians that they must encounter, 1 Jn. 4:10-11:

1. John says that we must copy God's love for us unto others, v. 11.
2. John then explains that love of God for us: God loved us when we did not love Him, and sent His Son to soak up His wrath against our sin (meaning of **propitiation**, Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, p. 161-185), 1 Jn. 4:10.
3. Thus, loving others as **God** does means that **we** must give of ourselves to help others who may not return such love even if this includes bearing up under the pains caused by their sins!
4. Accordingly, Christian overseers should teach and lead Christ's people even if doing so produces the most costly, painful or harmful effects possible to themselves, John 21:15-18:
  - a. Bothered at the thought of being crucified, Peter thus denied his Lord prior to Christ's crucifixion, Jn. 18:25-27.
  - b. After Christ's resurrection, in spite of Peter's being crucified for **doing** so, Peter was to feed Christ's flock, J. 21:15-18!

D. God's love that fulfills the believer who practices it causes one to obey Scripture no matter what it costs, 1 John 5:3a!  
 IV. **At this point, the believer may wonder if the cost of practicing God's love is worthwhile. John offers motivation for us as follows:**

- A. God encourages us to love since this demonstrates our saved status, an assurance needed for sustaining our joy, 1 John 4:18-20.
- B. God encourages us to love since it creates boldness to face God's judgment after the rapture, something needed for joy, 1 Jn. 4:17.
- C. God encourages us to love since doing so leads us to live apart from fear in life, a necessity for happiness on this earth, 4:18!
- D. We must love since God commands us to do so (1 John 3:11), for disobeying this is sin, and sin blocks joy with God, 1 Jn. 1:3-4!

***Application:*** *To be fulfilled by experiencing loving relationships, we must (1) believe on Christ to receive God's indwelling Spirit, Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:13. (2) Then we depend upon God's Spirit instead of (a) leaning on other sinful, fickle humans to be loved (Ps. 27:10), and instead of (b) relying on our sinful, fickle selves to express it adequately (Rom. 7:22-25). We must (3) confess as sin any failure here, 1 Jn. 1:9! (4) We'll then enjoy loving relationships!*

***Lesson:*** *Happiness in relating to others takes using unconditional love, for this immunizes one from both the give and take expressions of sinful, capricious and thus painful human "love!"*

**Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)**

In 1993, a theological controversy was brewing over the book authored by Professor Murray Harris of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School entitled, From Grave to Glory. Dr. Harris had actually written theological error in the book, claiming that Christ's resurrection body was not essentially material, but somewhat ethereal and spiritual instead.

Dr. Norm Geisler, a former TEDS professor and associate of Dr. Harris, wrote a critique of Harris' work after failing to get a hearing through the proper channels of the denomination. For his work, Dr. Geisler experienced the following criticisms from the establishment at Trinity and the Evangelical Free Church denomination: (a) that he wrote "groundless but persistent accusations...against the orthodoxy of Dr. Harris...;" (b) that "Dr. Geisler has misrepresented his (Harris') views...;" (c) and that he has done so by "misquotation, by distortion, by omission, and by ignoring distinctions..." (back cover of Harris' book, From Grave To Glory). Christianity Today, an Evangelical magazine heavily staffed by Trinity alumni, printed a cartoon showing Dr. Geisler squaring off with Dr. Harris in a boxing ring!!

Dr. Robert Culver, longtime retired professor at TEDS wrote his defense of Dr. Geisler in his work, A Wake Up Call, charging the TEDS leadership and Evangelical Free denomination with failure to note the in Harris' book and of misrepresentations of Dr. Geisler.

In the end, Dr. Murray Harris admitted that his theological view was in error, and he recanted it. The president of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School resigned, and the crisis was over.

But more important was the response of Dr. Norm Geisler. Instead of taking an "I told you so!" stand, he quietly wrote to the officers of the Evangelical Free denomination and confirmed the fact that in his estimation, Dr. Murray Harris' theology was now corrected, and that he, Geisler currently supported the theological stand of Dr. **Harris. No fuss, no anger, no revenge. Just quiet, humble support for the corrected Dr. Murray Harris!**

May we have this kind of love in bearing with one another! May we depend upon God's supernatural Holy Spirit for it!