

Real and Counterfeit Love

The real “mother of all battles” was not the Iraq war, as Saddam Hussein claimed it would be, but it is the spiritual battle that started in heaven, before mankind even existed, and has been going on ever since. It is described more clearly than anywhere else in the Bible in these verses from the middle of the book of Revelation:

Revelation 12

⁷ And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon;

⁸ And the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

Many misleading pictures have been drawn about this battle, showing angels fighting with spears, swords, and shields:



This is a false idea! Angels are spiritual beings, and do not use carnal weapons. Consider just a few evidences:

1. When the serpent tempted Eve, he did not come with carnal weapons but with subtle arguments designed to uproot her allegiance and love from God. (*Genesis* 3:1-5).
2. When Jesus met the tempter (*Matthew* 4:1-11) in the desert, the battle was over Christ’s mind and heart—His

allegiance to God. False ideas were presented very subtly, if possible to take Christ's allegiance away from His Father.

3. When Jesus returns to the earth on a white horse in *Revelation* 19, it says "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword" (vs. 15). This is clearly a reference to the Word of God, which is also given as His name in vs. 13.
4. The apostle Paul made a direct statement about the battle:

2 Corinthians 10

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The battle is over thoughts and imaginations, word, ideas, principles. God and Christ have their thoughts, and Satan has his. They are antagonistic to each other. The highest principle in God's kingdom is called by the name, Love:

1 Corinthians 13

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Satan has his counterfeit of that, which Jesus called "lusts":

John 8

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

We tend to think of "lust" as an extreme excitement of the passions of the human body, but it can be much more subtle and refined. For example, it can manifest itself as an overly strong attachment to one's earthly relatives:

Matthew 10

³⁷ He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

To love a relative more than God is to put them above Him. It is putting the creation above the Creator, or worshiping the creation, which is idolatry. This kind of “love” is simply “lust” in an innocent dress, and carrying a more polite name. But eventually, when placed under pressure, it will lead to lies and murder, as Jesus said about the devil who originated this misuse of love.

Satan is a deceiver, and there is nothing more deceptive than to imitate the truth. The world is full of songs, books, poems, and movies about love. If this were the true kind of love, then the world would be a holy place, where individual rights would be respected, and crime would be non-existent. Since this is not at all the case, we may be sure that most of what passes as love is simply lust (strong feelings of the flesh and mind) dressed up in a white garment.

Real love is defined in the Bible, very clearly. We need to pay attention to that definition or we will be fooled by the counterfeit. The counterfeit love looks very good on the outside. It has a care for others, and concern. It wants to do what is right for all involved, so far as it understands. But it neglects the principles that God has laid down to guide the feelings, and therefore it ends up doing harm rather than good. It ends up fighting on the wrong side. Jesus said:

John 16

² The time comes, that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.

What a terrible delusion this is, to think that you are doing service to God by killing His servants! The Jewish leaders, for example, thought they were doing the best thing possible when they crucified Christ:

John 11

⁴⁸ If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation...it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

Didn't they show great love for their nation by doing this? Certainly. These were not cold-blooded killers, they were family men, responsible and educated leaders, and patriots. But their zeal was not guided by the right principles and therefore they killed an innocent man, and not just a man but the Son of God. In their "love" they killed the personification of true Love Himself. What a fatal delusion!

How could they have avoided this? God had already told them how in this prophecy from the book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 56

¹ Thus says the Lord, Keep judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

This verse applied directly to their time, for when Jesus appeared, it was the time for "my salvation" and "my righteousness to be revealed." Those whose hearts inclined to honesty and strove to do right in the sight of God, would be ready to meet the Messiah. Those who "hungered and thirsted after righteousness" would be "filled" (*Matthew 5:6*)

We must not think of "justice" as simply the dealing out of punishments to the disobedient. It also involves righteous rule, distributing blessings to those who can use them. In God's kingdom, mercy and justice are not to be separated:

Psalms 85

¹⁰ Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

When God saw man fall into sin, His mercy led Him to take the punishment upon Himself, through the offering of Jesus upon the cross. This opened up a new dimension of jus-

tice, for this offering was in accord with the principles of justice. The broken law demanded the destruction of the sinner, but Christ would take the punishment upon Himself. This offering opened up a legal door by which sinners could be forgiven, all in accord with the principles of justice. Because Christ paid the price for the sins of others, this payment could be placed to their account—if they would claim it. It was a wonderful blending of justice and mercy.

But the priests and rulers overlooked judgment and justice because true justice clashed with their desires. They didn't want the "whole world" to "believe on Jesus" for that would have meant the loss of their power, position, prestige, and honor. Of course, their families would be involved too...for what would be the prospects of the children if the father lost his good position in the nation? If they all became poor men like Jesus, what would become of their fine houses? And how could they admit to the people that they were not the spiritual leaders that they claimed to be? But the word of God is very plain that in seeking for justice we must not be influenced by the desire to advantage ourselves at the expense of others.

This will become clear as we look now at some of the principles of justice laid down in the law:

Exodus 23

¹ You shall not raise a false report: put not your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

² You shall not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall you speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.

There is no room for "majority rule" in true justice. Might does not make right. Nor is there room for listening to "false reports." But if someone I love and respect comes to me speaking evil of another, may I not take their witness as true? No, not if you want to follow justice. True justice requires more. It means loving your neighbor as yourself, and not just the few neighbors whom you like, but all the neighbors, including

strangers and those who are different from you.

Deuteronomy 17

⁶ At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

This principle is repeated throughout the Old and New Testaments—one witness is not enough. It should be obvious that two or three witnesses must be independent of the other. Two or more people repeating the same false story that they were told by the first person would not represent justice. And the witnesses must agree!

Leviticus 19

¹⁵ You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: you shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

True justice is not moved by pity alone. A person, in order to advantage themselves, may represent themselves as poor, mistreated, and maligned. But this verse makes it clear, you “shall not respect the person of the poor.”

Likewise, neither shall the mighty be favored. True justice must be separate from all fleshly favoritism, otherwise it becomes a slave to lust, and not a tool of true love. Today, it is quite common for justice to be perverted in favor of the rich; he who has enough money can win his case by dragging it out in court until the poorer person cannot afford to pay the cost anymore. This is a corrupt system, as it merely serves the lusts of the rich.

Leviticus 19

¹⁶ You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people: neither shall you stand against the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

There is no room in true justice (which is grounded on true love) for “talebearing;”—that is, repeating stories and evil in-

situations against another when he cannot be there to answer and defend himself. This is a tool of lust by which it seeks to gain favor for itself from others, by working on their emotions of sympathy. The word of God condemns this.

Leviticus 19

¹⁷ You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

¹⁸ You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Lastly, in this verse true justice is finally revealed to be none other than True Love itself. To love your brother is to bring his sins plainly before him, so that he can correct them. It is not to repeat his supposed errors and failings to others without talking to him. That would be cowardice and selfishness. To repeat the supposed sins of another without going directly to him, is an attempt to build myself up by putting others down. It is not love, but self-exaltation, a lifting up of my flesh above the flesh of another. On the side of the listener, you do not show love to another by lending them a sympathetic ear in this evil work, but instead you encourage sin, and therefore participate in it.

This false sympathy is just how evil was spread in heaven, and then later upon this earth. The same methods are still used, for Satan is the “father of lies” (*John* 8:44), and what better way to spread a lie than to repeat it where the person accused cannot be there to defend himself?

Jesus also made it clear in *Matthew* 18:15 and *Matthew* 5:23,24 that when you have something against your brother you are to go to him alone, and make it right. You are not to go to others first. This is love. Love “hides a multitude of sins” (*James* 5:20) by addressing the sinner directly, and not exposing his shame to the world.

“You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge...” (*Leviticus*

19:18). Here again, we see how mercy is combined with justice. How many wars have been fought because of revenge, or in an attempt to punish past wrongs.

But isn't it justice to punish the wrong-doer? Yes, in the end it is, but where is mercy? In God's kingdom, justice and mercy are joined together. A man who is moved by the love of God will be looking for ways to restore and recover his neighbor, not to take revenge or vengeance upon him.

If a man is guilty of a wrong, but truly repents and wishes to restore whatever he can of the damage that was done, then forgiveness is the other option that Christ has shown us. For this is how God has worked out His own justice on our behalf. We sinned against Him, yet He paid the price that we could not pay.

Justice means balancing the scales. A man who is condemned by the law is in debt to it. There are two ways of balancing the scales:

1. Deliver the man up to punishment. This does not restore the damage that he has done, but it prevents him from doing further damage.
2. A better option, when the way is open for it, is for someone who is able, to bear the man's debt on his behalf, and thus give him a chance to live in harmony with the law again.

The second option is not a cheap way out. Someone has to pay. God illustrated this gospel method in various object lessons in the Old Testament, such as the "cities of refuge" and the taking up of the debts of another by a relative. There were certain consequences, and certain steps had to be fulfilled in order to receive this administration of mercy in justice.

Likewise with the forgiveness of man before God—it requires the surrender of the entire man to God and full consecration to serve His kingdom first, last, and best; it requires

the putting away the old way of life, and breaking the idol pursuits and lusts that were counted as the sum of life's joys; and finally it requires an earnest willingness to restore to others that which was taken from them, wherever possible.

Finally, true justice, or Love, is described very clearly in *1 Corinthians* 13, the "love" chapter:

⁴ Love suffers long, and is kind.

Love would suffer rather all abuses against itself, in order to win the other. It does not focus on itself and how badly it was treated (whether real or imagined).

⁵ Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.

Love does not think evil of another when there is no clear evidence, not even if there are all sorts of rumors spoken against them. This sin of "thinking evil" is mentioned in other places in the Bible, under such descriptions as "evil-speaking" (*Ephesians* 4:31), "slander" (*Psalms* 31:13), or "accusation against elders" (*1 Timothy* 5:19). The first Psalm divides the godly and ungodly by this test: the ungodly "sit in the seat of the scornful." (*Psalms* 1:1) The scornful are those who look down upon others as worse than themselves and speak this way.

This sin of evil-speaking is also mentioned in the 9th commandment:

Exodus 20

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

How does one bear false witness against a neighbor?

1. By intentionally overstating or exaggerating his actions in order to convey a false impression;
2. Hinting or insinuating that he has evil motives;
3. Stating even facts in such a manner as to mislead;
4. And intentionally suppressing facts that might put his actions in a positive light.

These all come under the class of “bearing false witness”, and are not the tools of Love, but rather devilish lust.

True Justice, or Love, never exaggerates the evil of another, in order to advantage it’s own case. It would rather suffer loss itself, than have the other suffer loss.

Jesus said,

John 14

¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments.

The commandments, such as the ones we have considered here, define love. They help us to discern whether our “good” feelings, which we think are love, are actually the real thing, or are merely lust. And they save us from trampling upon the rights of another, with the mistaken idea that we are pursuing justice. No, in God’s kingdom, justice is for all—God never sacrifices the rights of one in order to help the others. The only kind of sacrifice in God’s kingdom is self-sacrifice.

Self-sacrificing love is the only real love, and it is the only kind of love that will endure in the end.

The last half of the book of Revelation is devoted to the final battle that will take place on earth: a battle between true love, and false love. Those who stand on God’s side will “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (*Revelation 14:12*) This is simply just another way of saying that they possess and practice true love: the love of God. There will be no lies in their mouth, and they will be without fault before God’s throne. (*Revelation 14:5*)

Yet the rest of the world will consider them to be liars, heretics, deceivers, and the worst threat to human security, and after trying bribes, threats, and persecution, will sentence them to death (*Revelation 13:15; 16:9; 17:6; 18:24*). This is the same treatment Jesus, the king of Love, received from the world and worldly religion of His time. The “servant is not greater than His master” (*John 15:20*), and so those who pur-

sue true love must expect the same treatment.

Yet true love, which is built on the word of God, will not be extinguished, for the “word of the Lord endures forever.” (*1 Peter* 1:25)