Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author of today’s devotion begins with this passage from Ecclesiastes 9:10 – “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might . . .” A similar saying is: “Any job worth doing is worth doing well.” Both talk about giving your best to the task.

But the second raises the question: “How do we determine the value of a job?” It is found in the job itself? Does the job have some intrinsic value that gives it worth? Those who busy themselves with menial labor may beg to differ.

I remember a day working on an assembly line. One of the presses broke down, so we had nothing to do. Everyone was just sitting around. The foreman came around, handed me a broom and said, “Look busy.” It seemed to me a meaningless job. But I did it like it was the most important job in the world.

While some jobs may be of critical importance and others wouldn’t be missed if they never got done, the one consistent thing is the value we bring to the job. If we do each job as if it is the most important job in the world, then there is value in the work. And the value of a job done well is there for everyone to see.

Day Two

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today’s devotion is the first in a series on love. Herman W. Gockel is the author. So for the next few days, I will be reprinting his devotions on the subject of love. The series will be taking a look at 1 Corinthians 13. He begins:

“There are some Bible passages which are so well-known that a mere reference to their location in the Scriptures will suffice to recall the entire content of the passage. Thus, for instance, John 3:16 has come to be known as the Gospel in a nutshell. The Twenty-Third Psalm calls to mind the entire shepherd scene, and Matthew 18 suggests the various stags of brotherly admonition.

Another such convenient label for an important Scripture teaching is *1 Corinthians 13*. This matchless chapter has become known as Paul’s great “hymn of love.” In language as simple as it is sublime, and eloquent as it is earnest, Paul in this chapter first proclaims the absolute necessity of Christian charity and then describes this Christian grace in action. The word *charity* is used throughout this chapter in the sense of genuine Christian love. *1 Corinthians 13*, therefore, is known as the Bible’s chapter of love.

Could there be a chapter more important for the world in which we live, where the love of many has waxed cold? Could there be a chapter more important for our Christian congregations and Christian families where, in many cases, the milk of human kindness has gone sour and rancor and bitterness prevail?

Let us return again and again to the sweet waters of *1 Corinthians 13*. Let us remind ourselves repeatedly that he who believes John 3:16 must *live 1 Corinthians 13*. “by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,” says Jesus, “if ye have love one to another.” It will be our purpose in the following meditations to dwell upon the beauties of Paul’s great hymn of love. To that end we pray our Lord:

Give us faith to trust Thee boldly,

Hope, to stay our souls on Thee;

But, oh! best of all Thy graces,

Give us Thine own charity!

Day Three

Grace to you peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Love’s Supremacy**

(*Over Lip Religion*)

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. *1 Corinthians 13:1*

There is an interesting connection between 1 Corinthians 13 and 1 Corinthians 12. In the 12th chapter Paul had cataloged the many and varied spiritual gifts which God has given to His church. In the 13th chapter he shows that *all* of these gifts – if not coupled with Christian love – are nothing. “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.”

There is an earnest warning in these words for every Christian. Though I be a church member all my life, though I be an officer in my congregation with a long and enviable record, though I have the highest degree of theological knowledge and occupy a place of highest prominence, yea, though I speak with angel eloquence about the Savior and His love – if in all these things I am not motivated by love to God and my fellow man, then all of my “gifts” and all of my “accomplishments” have no value in the sight of God. To Him they are as the dull clank of dead brass and the offensive jangle of a clanging cymbal.

Let us beware of a loveless Christianity, one that can see a brother or sister in dire need and merely say: “God bless you.” Rather let us come back again and again to Bethlehem, to Calvary, and melt our loveless hearts of stone in the warming rays of God’s eternal love. If God so loved us, how can we withhold the full measure of our love even from the least of those for whom our Savior died? Well might we pray:

Give me a faithful heart, Likeness to Thee,

That each departing day Henceforth may see

Some *work of love* begun, some deed of kindness done,

Some wand’rer sought and won, Something for Thee. Amen.

Those are good words from Herman W. Gockel. Genuine Christianity is a necessity in today’s culture. Those outside the Church (and maybe a growing number inside) aren’t interested religious platitudes and empty piety. As someone has said, they don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Day Four

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Love’s Supremacy**

(*Over Intellectual Attainments*)

Though I . . . understand all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing. *1 Corinthians 13:2*

Paul was one of the intellectual lights of his day, having enjoyed the best advantages afforded at Jerusalem. In the language of today, Paul was a college man. But it is not as a college man that Paul is remembered today. When the Lord by a miracle of His love transformed the proud and haughty Saul into the meek and humble Paul, Paul’s diplomas and degrees took on an entirely new significance. They were but the measure of his talents which he now could dedicate to the loving service of his Lord and to the service of his fellow men.

Paul’s intellectual attainments meant nothing – until they had been sanctified by the Savior’s love, and consecrated to the unselfish service of the Savior’s brethren.

We are living in a day of intellectual snobbishness. Wise men are glorying in their wisdom. The flames of intellectual pride and arrogance, in many instances, have dried up the cooling waters of sweet kindness. “This wisdom,” however, says the Scripture, “descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, *full of mercy and good fruits*.”

May God in His goodness grant us a wisdom that is surrendered to *love*, a knowledge which seeks no personal recognition or acclaim, but seeks only greater opportunities for the exercise of helpful, healing charity. Like the Savior, in whom dwelt all the wisdom of heaven, let us dedicate our intellectual attainments to humble service to all men.

It is at the foot of the cross that all knowledge finds its true perspective. That is why Isaac Watts could write:

When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride!

Day Five

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Love’s Supremacy**

(*Over Mechanical Charity*)

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. *1 Corinthians 133*

In these words Paul reaches the climax of his statements regarding the supremacy of love. At first reading we might say: “Surely, if a person bestows all of his goods to feed the poor and finally gives his body to be burned, that person has the gift of charity in the highest degree.” “But no,” says Paul, “it is possible for me to do all these things and still not have a heart of love.”

Love is an attitude. It is a condition of the heart without which the activity of our hands can have no value. It is a comparatively simple matter to hand a hungry man a dime or stuff a dollar into a church envelope or contribute to the United Fund. It is an entirely different matter to have a heart which has been transformed by the Savior’s love, a heart which daily thanks Him for His su0perme sacrifice on Calvary’s cross, and which then goes out in compassion to all who are in need of the Savior’s love and ours.

We are living in a day of organized charity. Perhaps it would be well if first each of os would organize his *own* charity. Let us coordinate our heart and hands, our attitudes and actions. Let us make sure that every deed of love, every act of kindness is an expression of a heart which has been warmed by the love of Christ and which, like the heart of the Savior, bleeds with compassion for all mankind. “My little children,” says John, “let us not love merely in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in *truth*.” Let the deeds of our hands be the sincere expression of our heart, and let our heart be like the heart of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Our lips will then overflow in the prayer:

Take my *love*, my Lord, I pour At Thy feet its treasure store;

Take myself, and I shall be Ever, only, all for Thee. Amen.

Those are again good words from Herman Gockel. I would add that part of the meaning of these words comes from the vary nature of God and our bankruptcy if we are separated from Him. God is love. That’s part of who He is. It’s His nature. That’s why Paul will write later that of faith, hope and love only love will remain. Love is who God is. And if we don’t have God – if we aren’t joined together with Him who is love – then we can do exceptional things as described here and it will profit us nothing because by our unbelief we have cut ourselves off from Him who is love. Apart from Christ, we are lost. We are dead. And no amount of heroic works will change that.