

The Greatest Thing in the World

Chapter 21 (last) of "The Spontaneous You"

by Norman Grubb

And the last word -- back to our beginnings -- "faith that worketh by love." If faith wins the battles within, love wins them without. Faith in action is love in action, and we are the eternal love. Our active life is now lived by this new motivation. Everything we do is part of a life of outpoured love. That is what the Bible calls doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, doing it as being He doing it.

We are enthusiasts, wholehearted, thorough, because there is a meaning to it, a purpose in it. We do not use the word sacrifice, because love enthusiastically gives its all to meet others' needs. It has seen and found the great prize -- the secret of the universe: to be as God who is love. Certainly love claims all and we are the self-given. Everything we have, everything we are, is already given. We accept the principle of the corn of wheat -- that if it die, it brings forth much fruit. Life for us for eternity is others living.

Does that mean years at the machine or desk or kitchen? It may do, as the wage-earner or the housewife, in private or public life, where normal duties fulfilled in honesty, efficiency, reliability, enthusiasm, bear witness to a dedication beyond ourselves; and the special opportunities arise to give the reason why; and where love turns the full-timer into the over-timer, when the hours of relaxation open doors for further service.

Love knows no discrimination. Love thy neighbor, for I am to see all as Jesus Christ. Self-love has its favorites, for it is really the self it is loving, "my" parents, "my" wife, for all we really own is our self-reaction to things; that is why Jesus tells us to "hate father, mother, wife", because what we really hate is the self-love which loves them for itself. But when the Other Self is my real self, Christ in me, then my love is self-giving and I love my loved ones for their benefit, not mine, and I love all men like that. All I still have is my self-reactions

to things and people, but now they are Christ-reactions, self-giving, not self-seeking. That love possesses all. Possessiveness is to serve all, not be served by all. That love owns the world, because nothing and nobody can stop me from loving with the love which gives, not gets, and nothing is outside the reach and ownership of such love. That is God's love which owns all by giving Himself to all.

Love loves its enemies, for, as we have said, an enemy is one that wrongfully hurts me. But as I see with God's eyes I know it is not I that he has hurt, but himself. The killer kills himself, not the one he kills. So seeing with God's eyes, if a man cheats me, thinks he cleverly deceives me, robs me, I am not the cheated, deceived, robbed: he is, for he has done these things against himself. So I can love him, for I see his real need -- of the Christ of God. That is how I can fulfill Jesus' words to turn the other cheek, go the second mile, give the cloak when he takes the coat. Because I can see that he is the hurt and needy, not I, and instead of being primarily bothered by my temporary human hurt or loss, I can look to see how I can be more concerned with loving him than with my losses.

Love edifies, which means builds up. You do not build up a foundation, you build a foundation, and then build up from it. So love builds up in my brother Christian by always recognizing his foundation. When I see him, no matter how externally obscured by cloudy humanity, I see through and see Christ. There I am one with him. There I can hold to our unity when many externals of outlook, viewpoint, and behavior may separate. That is how I can be positive, not majoring on weaknesses, but building on the fact of our one foundation.

"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" I may have some fantastic idea of the unseen God and love my fantasy: I can see my brother as he is, no fantasy about that; and I am to love him as he is, not as I would like him to be, because I am to see deeper than the external and see the real Christ in him. I accept him as he is, and it is not for me to try to change him, but to love him as being Christ to me, and leave Christ to do the changing. In doing that I love God, for that is where God is -- in my brother.

And once again, love is a debt. "Owe no man anything but to love one another." Love is ministry to others, because we love our neighbor as being ourselves. Love exists only to meet need, so love always owes because need always has a claim. Love has to pay, and the secret is that love is the eternal satisfaction, the eternal joy, the eternal freshness and gaiety, the answer to the meaning of life, for God is this eternal life and God is love.

Supposing our lives are taken from us as it has been with some of my beloved co-workers in the Congo. That is the human ultimate of self-giving. They crowned a life spent with the Congolese, by having their lives taken from them by some of the Congolese. What more perfect ending to the self-given life? The ending Jesus had. We congratulate them. For us it may not be martyrdom, but our lives are given in the same way. We have already died with Jesus to ourselves. We are already in resurrection life. All we have and are is no longer ours, but expendable, and we expect God to take and use it, and He does.

For a reward? Love is its own reward. It asks nothing except the privilege of loving more. That is the eternal crown. We do not look for some kind of heavenly coronation which will bring some special credit or place of prominence for ourselves, but one crowning day only -- Browning's"

"So shall crown THEE the topmost, ineffablest, uppermost crown --

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down":

and our crown to be "like him for we shall see Him as he is": and to be like Him is to be love as He is love.

So life in its fullest meaning consists of two absolutes. The first is the fact that we are not we, but He. The second, built on the first, that life is not He and we, but others.

Our final response to these absolutes is thankful recognition. We commit ourselves to him, yes; but far more important, He has committed Himself to us, and what He takes He holds, and what He holds he moulds, and what He moulds He uses.

So we launch out into the deep of God. We launch out by recognizing that He has already seized hold of us and launched us out in His beloved Son, in who we are and He in us. "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them."