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On Love To Our Neighbor- No. 2

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Lecture II

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Text.--Matt. 22:39: "And the second is like unto is; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

In speaking upon this portion of our Lord's epitome of the divine law, I will first enquire

I. What kind of love is here required;

II. Second, state some of the things implied in this love;

III. Third, show that nothing short of this love is true humanity; and

IV. Lastly, that nothing less is true morality.

I. The love required toward our neighbor is certainly not complacency in his character.

- 1. Complacency is approbation and delight in character; but our Lord makes no distinction between the good and the bad, and therefore He requires us to love them all. But it cannot be that He requires us to approve and delight in the character of bad men; and hence we must conclude that the love of complacency is not in His mind, and is not the thing He requires. To have complacency in the character of wicked men as wicked, is to be as bad as they. This no reasonable man can suppose to be what the Savior requires, or what He interprets the law of God to require.
- 2. Again, it is not the love of fondness which we sometimes feel towards particular individuals. Some persons are naturally pleasing to certain other persons; some are so to all, being naturally amiable and adapted to awaken pleasing emotions. But this is not the love referred to in the text.
- 3. Again, this love cannot be involuntary. As I said before of the love required towards God that it must be a voluntary act and could not be involuntary because if it were, it could not be justly

demanded; so I say of this love to our neighbor. It cannot be involuntary, for if it were, no just being could require it.

- 4. Positively, this love to our neighbor is and must be good-will. God's love to man is good-will -- a pure and strong interest in his welfare, a desire for his happiness, and the positive willing of his happiness as the object dearest to his heart. The way in which His great love has manifested itself proves this. Our very reason affirms that this is the love God has borne and now bears to our race. Consequently we must conclude that this is the love which He requires men to exercise towards each other.
- 5. Note again, that this love requires us to esteem our neighbor's interests as our own. This rule applies to all our neighbors -- to our enemies as well as to our friends.
- 6. Again, it is a constant love; not fitful and evanescent; and not impulsive, but flowing from a fountain of good-will, ever enduring. It is a state of mind -- an established state, which regards our neighbor's interests as our own.

II. I pass now to name some things implied in this love.

- 1. It does not imply the universal and equal distribution of our energies and means among all mankind, or even among all who may be near enough to be known to us. It cannot mean to imply this, because with such a meaning, it would be impossible to obey it.
- 2. There can be no doubt that the law of God demands good-will towards all mankind, always, under all circumstances; but there are circumstances which forbid such modes of expressing it as would be proper at other times. A criminal, suffering the just sentence of human law, must not have from us the same acts of good-will as would be fitting after his sentence is served out, or if he were not under sentence at all. The relation which sinners come to sustain towards God under the sentence of His law is such as forbids Him to bless them. It is not that He has ceased to love them in the sense of a deep, intense interest in their happiness; but He loves all the rest of His intelligent creatures, no less, and their interests demand of Him that He should execute His righteous law against the wicked. Hence He cannot give them even so much good as a cup of cold water.
- 3. The same circumstances may sometimes demand of us the same withholding of positive efforts to do good to the wicked.
- 4. Again, since each one is by this law required to love his neighbor, it is plain that God intends these kind offices should be mutual. If God does us good, we should seek gratefully to do Him good. If He promotes our interests, we should strive to promote His.
- 5. So of children as towards their parents. Children should not always receive and never give, but should account it a great privilege to repay their parents for the labor and care bestowed on themselves. When parents are spared in life so long as to become old and helpless, their children should rejoice in the opportunity to requite the favors shown them when they too were helpless.

- 6. So of subjects and rulers. So between pupils and teachers, there are reciprocal interests. On neither side should it be all receiving and no giving; but there should be mutual receiving and giving on both sides.
- 7. In like manner this Institution, including its teachers and its students, sustains close relations to its founders and patrons. Others have labored; we enter into their labors. Others have given their money; we are enjoying its benefit. There is not a building here but is indebted to some donors abroad. Others have prayed, and we have received blessings from God for those prayers.
- 8. Hence we should seek to requite those favors, doing all we can to promote the very objects to which those Christian friends have so devoted their wealth and their prayers.

So ministers who preach and their people who hear, should be mutually giving and receiving good, to and from each other. All of us, instead of being merely recipients of good from others, should strive to do good to others also, rendering back into their bosoms liberally.

- 9. Why should not this principle apply to all men towards God? Ye who have never cared for God; is it right that you should receive everything from God and make Him no returns of love and obedience? Have you no zeal for His honor and no devotion to His interests? He has nourished and brought you up as a child, and you have done nothing else but rebel against Him. Is that right? Why should you not rather say, God has given me talents and I must render back to Him in their use as I may have opportunity? Certainly you must regard God as your neighbor in this sense, that He has interests and rights, and you are under the highest obligations to requite Him for unnumbered favors.
- 10. The same is true also of your relations to the church of Jesus Christ. How much do you owe to Him? In view of it all, have you any right to say --"Not one word of acknowledgement, not one thank-offering shall He ever have from me!" What do you not owe Him! Has it ever occurred to you how really you owe to Him your very existence, since, but for His mission of mercy, you had never lived? But for that offering and sacrifice on Calvary, none of us could have had any existence at all. But for that, Adam and Eve must have been cut down at once in their sin, the law taking its course of righteous judgment. -- "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." You live, therefore, only because God has had mercy on our race. Come now, walk up at once to meet the claims of this great truth. Are you not indebted to God for everything? And will you pay back absolutely nothing? Here you are in the house of God, surrounded with an atmosphere of prayer, instead of being in hell, shrieking and wailing in the depths of despair!

Do you say "I don't owe Christ anything?" But you profess to be respectable. Yet who can respect you if you treat Jesus Christ so? Have you no sympathy with His great sacrifices and sufferings to save you? Would you leave all the labor and sacrifice for Him, and make no response of love or gratitude? Will you utterly refuse to love Him? Do you say -- "He is welcome to love me and to die for me; but I have nothing to pay him in return? I leave it for him to do and to suffer all, and not a word of things can he have from me." Do

you think this is right? Is it generous? Ought it to be deemed respectable?

III. Nothing short of the love here required is true humanity.

It is not true humanity to do good only to one's own offspring. They are regarded as parts of one's self, and hence doing good to them only, is nothing beyond a slightly enlarged selfishness. Nothing is really love to man -- true humanity -- except that love which estimates human well-being for its intrinsic value, and loves man as man.

IV. Nothing short of this is true morality.

- 1. Nothing less is required by our reason and our conscience. To lay special stress on our own interests because they are our own is not true morality. It is not, even though we aim to be honest in seeking the good of particular individuals. If it be only special individuals that we love, this is partiality.
- 2. Again, no man loves his friends in the sense that pleases God, unless he also truly loves his enemies. Suppose a man does love his friends. Hear what Jesus Christ says of precisely this case: "If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye?" "Do not even publicans [notorious sinners] the same?" Jesus Christ says: "Love your enemies." It can never be supposed that one does right unless he loves his enemies. Some one says: "There are certain persons whom I never wrong." What is the motive that leads you to do them good and not evil? If you truly loved your neighbor for right reasons, you would love every neighbor, and you would take every living man for your neighbor in the sense of this law. You would love every known being, because you would love to promote the happiness of all sentient existences, and you would aim to love each one according to the value of his well-being. Real benevolence would as truly seek to do good to enemies as to friends, if it could reach them, and do them as much good. Understand, that to love your friend aright, you must love him as God does, and for the same reasons. You can not love him aright unless you love your enemies also and for a similar reason. No man does anything for his friend acceptably to God, unless he would do as much for his enemies, if he could. God can give him no credit for doing good to his friends, unless he does it on a principle which would make him do as much for his enemies if he could. No man does any duty acceptably to God for one man, while he refuses or willfully neglects to do the same for another; and this I put on the ground that God's law requires you to love all your neighbors -- every neighbor; and if you have the spirit of obedience to God, you will.
- 3. No man does right in any proper sense who does not act from universal and disinterested love. On any other ground it cannot be acceptable for one moment. That mother nursing her babe has no credit from God for this, if she does it on no higher principle than the mere animal. She is bound to love her own offspring because God has placed her in precisely those relations. But let her by no means think she has any credit from God for obeying merely her animal instincts. Her soul should go higher than the mere animal. She is bound to study to please God.
- 4. Nothing short of this can be the condition of salvation. No man can be out of sin and in grace who is not brought into a state of true love to his neighbor. What would become of a man, applying at heavens' gate for admittance, who should meet there an enemy -- a man he had

never loved, whom he had hated and never prayed for? Could he pass by such a man into heaven?

- 5. How could you enjoy heaven without a holy heart? Some of you would hasten out as we have sometimes seen rude, unmannered boys rush to get out of church, even before the services of worship were closed. He who loves his neighbor will understand that it is one of his neighbor's rights to enjoy the public worship of God without being disturbed.
- 6. Without this love, salvation is naturally impossible. It is governmentally impossible; it cannot be, so long as God rules and cares for the interests of his great kingdom. The entrance to heaven is so guarded all round about that nothing shall by any means enter that worketh abomination -- nothing unholy. A man go there in his selfishness! Not if God can keep him out!

REMARKS.

1. If all men obeyed the laws of God, society would be perfect. I do not mean that there would be no further progress, no advance, no improvement; no, not this, for much remains to be done. But this is true, that morality would be perfect; there would be no more war and strife. Every family would be a little emblem of heaven. Every community would bear the image of heaven. The wings of angels would come down so near, they would fan such loving hearts; and heaven's doors would stand open all day long before such a people.

2. We see how we are to treat those who are oppressed and in slavery. We are to put ourselves in their position and enquire what we should ask them to do for us, in their circumstances. Suppose that I and my family are in slavery. Election is coming on. Have I a right to expect that my friends in Ohio will cast their votes so as to bear most directly upon my liberation? I should be very prone to think that no man ought to cast his vote against my liberty, for the mere sake of money or office. Even politicians can see how shameful and how outrageously wrong it is to hold man as a chattel. That this should be deemed a Bible institution is of all monstrous things most monstrous! It is so revolting that I cannot well imagine how anybody can be honest in holding this opinion. Yet let us be candid: I can easily see that the merely legal relation may exist without any violation of the law of love.

3. This golden rule is equally applicable everywhere and in all circumstances. It is good when applied in the matter of asking favors. We ought not to ask a favor of any man when a knowledge of his circumstances and a proper sympathy for his welfare, such as we would have him feel for ours, would forbid it.

4. The same is true of receiving favors. This law, honestly applied, would show us what favors we should be willing to allow others to do for us. Sometimes we cannot properly allow others to do us favors. If a poor man has labored for me a month and refuses to receive compensation, I too must by all means refuse to receive his labor as a gift. A proper regard to his circumstances compels me to refuse so great a gift from him. He cannot afford to give it; there fore I cannot afford to receive it.

5. You may see from this subject what the morality of unregenerate men is. It is not morality at all, in any just sense. All their morals is only sin.

6. You may also see God's personal relations to selfishness. Every particle of selfishness is personally hostile and hateful to God. It is so utterly unlike his heart, so totally opposed to all his principles and to all his acts, he can have no fellowship with it. He must forever hold it in utter abhorrence.
7. You may also see his governmental relations to sin. He can bear the personal insult and he does -- does for the time, and, but for governmental reasons, would pass it over perhaps forever. He endures with sinners now; he does not fret; does not manifest excited passion, as men do under insult; but the governmental bearings of sin he cannot overlook. The selfishness of men towards himself and towards each other, he must see. He is a magistrate, bearing the highest responsibilities of the universe. All eyes are turned upon him. He must mark the iniquities that are done among his subjects and his creatures. He must see all their wickedness, biting and devouring one another, trampling each other down. All eyes are upturned towards him. What says the Judge of all the earth to this! Ah, this must be answered! God's relations to his government make it an awful thing for man to love selfishness.
8. Every selfish sinner is in certain peril of eternal death. Men know this and cannot but know it. God's mercy flows at your feet, a deep, broad, glorious current; yet you heed it not! Yet you thrust Jesus away! You have done so often and long. Can you do it yet longer? Jesus with bleeding heart and loving hand pressing near to save you, but you are saying -- Depart from me! let me alone in my sins yet longer! I will not have this man to rule over me, nor to save me, on such terms of salvation!
- O sinner! will you still pursue a course so ruinous, and so outrageously abusive to Jesus Christ?

GLOSSARY

of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself.
Compiled by Katie Stewart

1. **Complacency, or Esteem:** "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. **Disinterested Benevolence:** "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*.
3. **Divine Sovereignty:** "The sovereignty of God consists in the independence of his will, in consulting his own intelligence and discretion, in the selection of his end, and the means of accomplishing it. In other words, the sovereignty of God is nothing else than infinite

benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXVI)*.

4. **Election:** "That all of Adam's race, who are or ever will be saved, were from eternity chosen by God to eternal salvation, through the sanctification of their hearts by faith in Christ. In other words, they are chosen to salvation by means of sanctification. Their salvation is the end- their sanctification is a means. Both the end and the means are elected, appointed, chosen; the means as really as the end, and for the sake of the end." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LXXIV)*.
5. **Entire Sanctification:** "Sanctification may be entire in two senses: (1.) In the sense of present, full obedience, or entire consecration to God; and, (2.) In the sense of continued, abiding consecration or obedience to God. Entire sanctification, when the terms are used in this sense, consists in being established, confirmed, preserved, continued in a state of sanctification or of entire consecration to God." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LVIII)*.
6. **Moral Agency:** "Moral agency is universally a condition of moral obligation. The attributes of moral agency are intellect, sensibility, and free will." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
7. **Moral Depravity:** "Moral depravity is the depravity of free-will, not of the faculty itself, but of its free action. It consists in a violation of moral law. Depravity of the will, as a faculty, is, or would be, physical, and not moral depravity. It would be depravity of substance, and not of free, responsible choice. Moral depravity is depravity of choice. It is a choice at variance with moral law, moral right. It is synonymous with sin or sinfulness. It is moral depravity, because it consists in a violation of moral law, and because it has moral character." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
8. **Human Reason:** "the intuitive faculty or function of the intellect... it is the faculty that intuits moral relations and affirms moral obligation to act in conformity with perceived moral relations." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE III)*.
9. **Retributive Justice:** "Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXIV)*.
10. **Total Depravity:** "Moral depravity of the unregenerate is without any mixture of moral goodness or virtue, that while they remain unregenerate, they never in any instance, nor in any degree, exercise true love to God and to man." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE XXXVIII)*.
11. **Unbelief:** "the soul's withholding confidence from truth and the God of truth. The heart's rejection of evidence, and refusal to be influenced by it. The will in the attitude of opposition to truth perceived, or evidence presented." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE LV)*.