

Charity and Loneliness

by Catherine Booth

True charity is concerned with the extension of the kingdom of Christ and is willing to take risks to achieve it, while spurious charity is concerned with human opinion and is unwilling to take risks.

Scripture: Matthew 23:23, Matthew 26:56, Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Galatians 6:9

Topics: "Divine Charity", "Selfless Love"

Description

Catherine Booth preaches on the importance of divine charity, emphasizing that possessing this love often requires walking a lonely path, just as Jesus and other faithful servants did. She highlights how true charity seeks the good of all, regardless of ingratitude, opposition, or persecution, and always abides by the moral law of righteousness. Catherine challenges listeners to examine their motives and actions, distinguishing between true, selfless love and false, self-seeking charity that craves human approval and recognition.

Transcript

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13.--"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

THE POSSESSION OF THIS DIVINE CHARITY OFTEN NECESSITATES WALKING IN A LONELY PATH.

Not merely in opposition and persecution, but alone in it, and here, again, Jesus, who was the personification of Divine love, stands out as our great example. He was emphatically alone, and of the people there was none with Him. Even the Disciples whom He had drawn nearest to Him, and to whom He had tried to communicate most of His thought and spirit, were so behind that He often had to reprove them, and to lament their obtuseness and want of sympathy. "Ye shall leave Me alone." In the greatness of His love He had to go forward into the darkness of Gethsemane. He was alone while they slept, and then He went all alone, through ribaldry, scorn, and sarcasm, to the Judgment Hall. He stood alone before Pilate. On the cross He hung unaccompanied!--ALONE!

And, as it was with the Master, so it has been with all those whom God has called to go in advance of their race. It was so with Paul, "At my first answer no man stood with me;" and it has commonly been so with those whom God has called to extraordinary paths. Must John have a revelation of things shortly to come to pass? He must go alone into the Isle of Patmos. Must Paul hear unspeakable words, not, at that time, lawful for a man to utter? He must go alone into the third heaven, and not be allowed even to

communicate what he saw and heard when he came down. In advance of other saints, he must necessarily go alone.

And just so, when God has called some of His followers to an out-of-the-way path, they have had to go alone in an untrodden way. Superior love necessitates a lonely walk. You shrink, and say, 'That seems so hard.' Yes, I know; I wish I could make it easier, but I cannot help it. I simply state the fact that superior love necessitates, in some measure, a lonely walk, because you see it is only they who thus love to whom the Lord tells His secrets. If you want to ask a confidential question, and get a confidential answer, you must be on the bosom of your Master. You won't be able to do it at a distance. Then, you see, when He gives to any soul superior light to its fellows, and that soul follows the light, it necessarily entails a path in advance of its fellows. Unless He can inspire and encourage them (which, alas! is hard work) to follow, he must go on alone.

That was a beautiful illustration we read in the lesson (Acts 10.) Here is Peter called to go in advance of the whole Church! Now, the Lord wants a man to do this, and who does He choose? He chooses impulsive, energetic, head-first Peter. But then, there is something to be done first. God lets down the sheet with all its unclean contents, and Peter fastens his eyes upon it. (I wish you had studied all the sheets the Lord has let down before your eyes, you would have come out very differently to what you have.) Peter studies them, and soon the Divine vision has absorbed Peter's attention. When the Lord has fairly got his attention, then comes the voice, "Now, Peter, rise, slay, and eat." Then, when the Lord had taught him his lesson effectually, and when Peter saw that he had not yet explored all the ideas of the Divine mind about the extension of His kingdom, that his business was to follow his Lord's directions, and not to have his own "ifs" and "buts," but go ahead and do as God bade him, then Peter goes on to carry out the Divine direction. Then the Church, aghast, as usual, at anything new--always down upon a measure, whether good or bad, if it has the damning quality of being new, is down upon it! This new Church, which had only just itself been brought to God by a new Saviour, a new revelation, a new call, and a new faith, is down upon Peter, and summons him before a council to answer for his conduct.

He tells them all about it in the truthful simplicity of a man of God, and, thank God, they had sense enough, yes, and love enough, charity enough, to accept his explanations, and to glorify God. Would to God we could get as much sense and charity in these days!

A lady writes me, only the other day, of her husband saying that he sympathizes with outside work, but contends that there is everything one wants in the Church; and another contends that there is everything everybody wants somewhere else, and so they are down upon all the Peters, that dare to do anything out of the jog-trot line. You may reason ever so urgently, and show them that these old measures are not enough for everybody, that there is a great mass of outlying population which they do not reach--the Gentiles of this generation; you may show them that these Gentiles are without the Holy Ghost, that they are not cleansed, that they are yet common and unclean; you may show them that these new measures of yours are quite as lawful as their old measures, and that, probably, they would be a great deal more useful, and, moreover, that they have been borne in upon you by the Holy Ghost, and that you feel as if there were a fire in your bones urging you to go and try them; but they will not hold their peace and glorify God, but will loose their tongues and vilify you.

False Charity looks more at the means than at the end; at the scaffolding, than at the building. Its possessor is more concerned about what men will think of him, than what will exalt and glorify the Redeemer. You can know it by this mark. Are you more concerned about what your neighbour, Mr.

So-and-So, or your minister, Rev. Mr. So-and-So, or even your bishop, thinks about you, than you are about the extension of the kingdom of Christ? Look out, my friend, your's is the wrong sort of Charity. True Charity looks at the end--the spread of Righteousness in the earth--THE REIGN OF THE KING, and it is not very fastidious about the measures, so that they are lawful.

I do not advocate anything unlawful, even as a means to do good--God forbid. But Divine Charity says, "Anywhere with Jesus--in the temple or outside of it--at the seaside or in Cheapside--on the mountain top or in the market-place--in the streets--anywhere, Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt only come and take Thine inheritance and reign over the hearts and souls of men. True Charity is only too glad to become a Jew to the Jews, as weak to the weak, if it can only pick them up; only too glad to descend to men of low estate, and put its arm round their necks, if it can only bring them to the Cross and bring them back to the heart and Heaven of God; and it does not care what the Pharisee on the other side says--not a bit; it is set on saving the poor sinner; it is pouring in oil and wine, and putting him on its own beast; IT IS INTENT ON SAVING HIM, and does not care what anybody thinks.

Have you got it? It is so nice. It makes you feel so warm and comfortable inside. It is beautiful, and it proves better and better every day, and it will be better still when you are dying--Faith and Hope will be done away, but this Love will last FOR EVER!

But you see it is self-evident that until the Church--I mean the people of God--have explored all the ideas which are in the Divine mind for the propagation of His Kingdom in the earth, SOMEBODY must be ALWAYS RECEIVING NEW LIGHT and making new departures, and there has never been a single instance in the history of the Church in which this has been done, but nearly the whole of that generation has raised a hue and cry against it! How would it be possible for God to bring about a revolution--a true revival, a grand aggressive movement of Christianity, without giving new light and calling somebody to some path in advance of all that has gone before? And what does it matter who? Whether it is Peter, or John, or Luther, or Fox, or Wesley, or Booth? What does it matter, SO THAT GOD DOES IT?

But this necessitates somebody leading the way--going on in advance. Will you be content to go in advance? Will you endure the hardness of a pioneer? Can you bear the ridicule and gibes of your fellow-men? Dare you go where the Holy Ghost leads, and leave Him to look AFTER THE CONSEQUENCES? If so, happy are you, and you shall have a harvest of precious souls; you shall shine as the stars for ever; but, if you draw back, His soul shall have no pleasure in you. The Lord help you! Step out on to the Divine Love, that is able alone amongst the breakers to bear your little barque--able to make YOU MORE than a conqueror. Oh, step out--follow, follow, follow--do not be afraid!

SPURIOUS CHARITY is the opposite of this. It must have human notice. Ostentation is its very essence. Cease to notice it, and it will soon die. Saul, the Pharisee, went about to establish his own righteousness before he got the true Charity. There was a grand opportunity for Pharisaic Saul. These Nazarenes, were they not everywhere spoken against? Was not this a grand opportunity for Him to be everywhere, spoken for? And so he takes advantage of public opinion, and becomes "exceedingly mad" against them; and, not satisfied with persecuting them in his own city, he goes after them into strange cities; but he reveals, afterwards, when he got the Divine Charity, that the mainspring of his zeal was SELF-GLORY.

False Charity hates to be in a minority--you never find it in an unrespectable minority--it wants company, and that of a respectable, genteel, kind. Its possessors are always sticklers for the traditions of the elders; their horizon is bounded very largely by the opinions of men and the attitude of the RULERS. They are

always asking, "Have any of the rulers believed on Him?"

Now, my friends, let this teach you wisdom and love. Prove all things before you condemn. I have no doubt Saul was an honest man, in the world's acceptance of the term, for he says he persecuted the Nazarenes ignorantly, thinking he was doing God service; but what a grand mistake he was making, and how effectually he was doing the WORK OF THE DEVIL! Of course, if he had perceived that he was mistaken, he would have ceased to BE mistaken.

I wish people would stop and think that the path they are now standing in the well-beaten track on which they are now walking with such slow dignity--was once quite as new and unconventional and outrageous to the coadjutors of their forefathers, as the path which any new departure by the Holy Ghost may set before them now. I wish such people would read history. I suppose they do not, or, if they do, they read it as they do the Bible--they fail to draw any practical principle from it. Such people should read "Neale's History of the Puritans," and see amid what a hurricane of excitement, opposition, contempt, and persecution their forefathers fought for the very paths they are now STANDING STILL IN, and holding so sacred that they cannot have them disturbed. Do you see how unphilosophically they are acting? If their forefathers had acted on the principles they are acting on, they would have stood still in old paths, and we would never have been in the new ones. These people stand in these paths of traditionalism and routinism, just where their forefathers left them, occupying all their time in admiring the wisdom and benevolence and devotion of their forefathers, instead of IMITATING THEIR AGGRESSIVE FAITH, and MARCHING ON TO THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD.

Which is the most God-honouring? Which has the most common sense in it? Which will please your forefathers the most? But it is now as it was in the days of the Son of Man--for, "Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets."

Alas! what a deal of this is going on today, only there is one difference--it is going on "under a Christian creed instead of a Jewish." It is only the creed that differs--the character, the spring of action, is the same.

Now, my friends, try yourselves--which Charity HAVE YOU GOT? Do you rejoice in the extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by any lawful means, or are you more concerned ABOUT THE COLOUR OF A MAN'S COAT THAN THE STATE OF HIS HEART? Would you rather the poor drunkard were left to rot and seethe in his misery, than that a man should put on a blue jacket with an "S" on his collar, to go and fetch him out? Would you rather have men damned conventionally than saved unconventionally? If you would, you are a Pharisee at heart--I care not what you call yourselves. Go home and read for your instruction Matthew 23:23-28.

Further, how bitterly this False Charity often comes out in individual cases. We will just take an illustration. We will suppose here is a family of decent, respectable, professedly Christian people, who have been to Church or Chapel most of their lives. Or here is a Church, we will suppose, of the same character--nothing particular has happened; they fear the Lord, and go comfortably along, and are just where they were ten or fifteen years ago, making up for deaths and removals. We will suppose that a member of that family, or that Church, as the case may be, gets converted. He reads a book, goes to a special meeting, or some providential utterance is the means of sending the light of God's Spirit upon his soul, and he is quickened and woke up to see the miserable, half-dead, guilty condition in which he is; he is praying, and groaning,

and feeling after God; he gets the sense of his transgressions and unfaithfulness being taken away, and the joy of God's salvation restored to his soul. Now, in a moment, almost immediately, as in the case of Peter, as soon as the internal work is done, comes the external path opened up. The Spirit of God lays before him some new work, something strikes him which has been long forgotten, or which never seems to have been recognised in his family, or Church. He sees what a grand thing that would be for the conversion of souls, and the extension of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and he feels it beginning to burn like a fire in his bones to enter this path of usefulness. He prays much over it, and he waits until he is fully satisfied that it is not a vain impulse, but that it is of the Spirit of God. Full of love, and faith, and zeal, he goes to tell his minister or some Christian friend; he expects that they will sympathise with his feelings, and enter into his project; but, alas! alas! they begin by raising objections--they start difficulties: 'Well, but you see that would be a little out of our order: that is not exactly our way of doing things. I am afraid the deacons would object; or I am afraid something would happen;' and if he has the misfortune to be young, (anybody would think it was a sin to be young) they will "squash" him out; they put the extinguisher on, and say, 'Wait, my brother, until you have more experience;' or, 'my sister,' especially, 'You must never presume to do anything of which we cannot approve?'

Oh! friends, you smile because you know how true it is! Oh, alas! the thousands of urgings of the Holy Ghost; the thousands of heavenly voices that have been as clear to human souls as ever Peter's sheet was to him; the thousands of glorious aspirations and schemes for the spread of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ that have been thus squashed by this spurious, false, selfish, devilish Charity! The Lord put it out.

Oh! I would not care what the Lord called my child to do that would be for the extension of his Kingdom and the glory of His name; I would not restrain her or keep her back. I might say, 'My child, it may be a painful thing for me to consent. I might have chosen another path for you; but if you are satisfied the Spirit leads you, go forward, and I will do all I can to help you.' Why? Because I want the King to have His own, and I do not care how it is, so that He gets His own, and I will have Him to use mine as well as me to get it.

Fathers and mothers, look out! If you grudge your children to God, He will be even with you. "Them that honour Me, I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." They shall get light weight all round, and be whipped with their own rods. Mind how you withhold that which is most precious from God! Mind you do not receive the grace of God in vain; **SOME PEOPLE DO.**

The fifth point in which the Divine, and the spurious, Charity contradict each other is, that Divine Charity--the pure love of God--IS LAW ABIDING.

That is, it always manifests itself in harmony with the great moral law of the universe--it never does evil that good may come! You never hear it saying--'I cannot say that this is exactly square; I know this is not exactly the right course, but then I can accomplish such and such objects by adopting it.' Never! that is of the devil. You may always know that the law of righteousness is entwined round the very heart of Divine Charity, and as justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne of its Divine Author, so righteousness is in the very core of its soul. It will never sacrifice righteousness for peace, or anything else, howsoever precious.

Now, what is the whole duty of man? To do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God; and, when the Holy Spirit has brought about that result in your soul, God will look on you with a beneficent eye, with a smile of approbation, and its genial influence will sun your whole being, and you will walk in the light of it,

even as the angels do in heaven. "Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God;" that is the whole duty of man--everything is included in that.

Do you hear it, oh ye temporizers with Divine law? Do you hear it, ye who say that we must come down partly, and be a little like the world, in order to win it; that you must come on to the level of the ungodly, in order that you may win them to God? I tell you that ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN! Do you hear this, you who contend for covering up by a False Charity certain sins which are sending men to perdition wholesale, and make laws and Acts of Parliament to protect men in these crimes? I know your specious arguments that come from the Devil; but I ask, is it justice to take one part of the human race, and that the weaker, and, therefore, according to the law of Divine Charity, demanding the greater protection from cruelty and wrong, and offer that part up for the supposed good of the others because the latter is stronger? Is that justice? Is that mercy? and, mind, I say emphatically for supposed good; for, do you think one part of God's creation can be trodden down without reacting with terrible moral force upon the other? Do you think it can? Was it ever done? Will it ever be done? No! not while He sits on His throne. Yes, supposed good, for facts mock your arguments. It is not for their good; you know it is not. You cannot accomplish your purpose when you have done all; and think you that you will escape, by your Satanic inventions, the Divine executioner? Think you that your specious arguments will avail with him who hath sworn in His holy habitation that He will avenge the oppressed and down-trodden of the earth? No, no! I see written between the lines, and I hear muttering between your speeches "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." You cannot escape the penalty.

The last characteristic of true Charity which I shall name is that IT HOLDS OUT, in spite of ingratitude, opposition and persecution. Its possessor seeks the good of all men, not because he ought merely, but because he cannot help it. His HEART is on the side of God and truth. He loves righteousness, and, therefore, cannot desist from seeking to bring all beings to love it, too, although they hate and despise him for so doing. Jesus held out in this glorious love, even in the agonies of crucifixion. "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." His heart was set on bringing man back to God, and He went through with it. His soul did not draw back, and His Divine love constrained Him even unto death.

Paul followed his Master in this respect; and though the more he loved some of his big converts, the less he was loved, he went on, seeking their highest good, not being hindered for a moment by their ingratitude. He loved THEM--not their good opinion or applause. A spurious Charity soon tires when the objects of it prove unworthy. Its possessor says: 'I have had enough of this; the kinder I am, the worse people treat me. I shall button up my pocket, and take my ease, till I am better appreciated.' Self-glory is the very life of spurious Charity: it dies right out, under ingratitude and contempt. Which have you got, my brother?--my sister?

Does somebody say, as a man who had been to a service in Scarborough the other day, and had been hearing some straight truth, said, when asked, "How did you like it?" The man, a young, prosperous tradesman in the town, shuffled about, and said: 'Well, it was awful; if that is true, I am on my way to hell.' Thank God he had found it out.

'Now, have you got this Divine Charity? I told you, at the beginning, it did not grow on unregenerate human nature, so if you are an unregenerate man, and have not the Holy Spirit, I want you to find it out. You have to begin at the beginning, and get the plant planted, no matter what spurious imitations you have got, if you have not got THE LOVE OF GOD. Have you got it, brother?--sister? If you have not, you can have it this afternoon. Will you seek it? We were all once without it, even as it is said, we "were the children of

wrath," even as others; "we hated those who hated us; we hated things, not because they were wicked, and against God, but because they were opposed to us personally; our love and hate were influenced by selfishness, the same as others, but now the Lord has renewed our hearts, and made us in some little measure like Him, who loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, God anointed Him, with the oil of gladness above His fellows." Oh! yes; the more you love righteousness and hate iniquity, the more of gladness you will have, and the more glorious the testimony you will give for God. You will be able to say, with David, "I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation." There will be no difficulty about declaring it. We find it easy to declare it when people get it. We cannot keep them quiet; they are like the early converts--they are up two or three together; and, like Paul, we have to say, "One at a time; you shall all prophesy, if you do it one at a time." When people get it, it bubbles up, and runs over; it is in them, "a well of water springing up," as our great Master said, "into everlasting life."

Have you got it? Have you got enough of it to lift you above your petty, selfish interests, or are you guided by the Charity that first looks inside to see how any proposition will affect SELF, instead of seeing how it will affect the Kingdom of God? And you, poor sinner, who know you have not got it? I have more hope of you than some who profess to have it. His great bowels of compassion move towards you; He is waiting to shed abroad this love in your heart. The feast is spread; all things are now ready. Oh! come into his banqueting house, and sit under his banner of love for ever and ever.

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