



*by B. R. Hicks*

# *Love Thyself*

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## Preface

The world's sinful selfishness has caused an infectious contamination and a corruptive stain of falsehood and error to become attached to God's Truth to "love thyself." So, just what did God mean when He told us to love ourselves? He told us to "love thy neighbour as thyself," so obviously we are to love ourselves.

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but **thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**: I am the LORD.... But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and **thou shalt love him as thyself**; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:18,34)

When we examine our actions, we clearly see that we do love ourselves because, when we have knowingly committed a trespass against our LORD, we go to Him, begging His forgiveness and pardon because we love ourselves and do not want to see ourselves having to suffer God's thoughts, feelings, and deeds of vengeance upon us. Because we repent, God, in Christ Jesus, forgives our sin, clothes our "self" with His love and forgiveness and restores unity and harmony in our spiritual relationship with Him. Therefore, if we love our neighbours and strangers as we love ourselves, we will work in every manner possible, according to God's Purposive Will, to rid ourselves of all remembrances of wrongs that we may have suffered from them in order to successfully restore unity and harmony between us and them. God, as the Owner, has the right to the disposition of our possessions, our rights, our justice, and our deeds of devotion. He also has a right to use our love and loyalty to Him for the benefit of our neighbours and strangers.

Remember, "loving thyself" means that we humble ourselves, repent, and turn to the LORD so that we can enjoy new forgiveness and new unity with Him. Loving our neighbours and strangers as we love ourselves means that we can enjoy new forgiveness and new unity with them, too.

When we submit our feelings entirely to the dictates of God's Will, He will purge our feelings of every revengeful thought and grudge against our fellowman. We must forgive our neighbours and strangers and bring them near to our hearts, just as God has forgiven us and brought us near to His heart.

Thus, God's Word reveals the real Truth about our responsibility to love our neighbours and strangers as we love ourselves. When we lovingly obey God's Word, we not only justify His forgiveness of our sins but also our existence in this present world.

This lesson deals with the qualifications of "loving thyself." May the eyes of our understanding become more enlightened concerning the true meaning of the second commandment of the LORD Jesus Christ. Then, we can become like the impartial Sun of Righteousness, Whose radiant rays of love and light shine forth upon the whole world.

— The Author

# Love Thyself

True love is from God and is an integral part of His Nature. Therefore, if a person, in his heart, truly loves God and his fellowman, he walks and lives in paradise on earth.

God's first commandment to man is for him to love the LORD God with all his heart.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And **thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart**, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

Then, in the New Testament, a scribe once asked Jesus Christ which of the commandments was first. Answering, Jesus gave the following reply:

...The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And **thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.** (Mark 12:29,30).

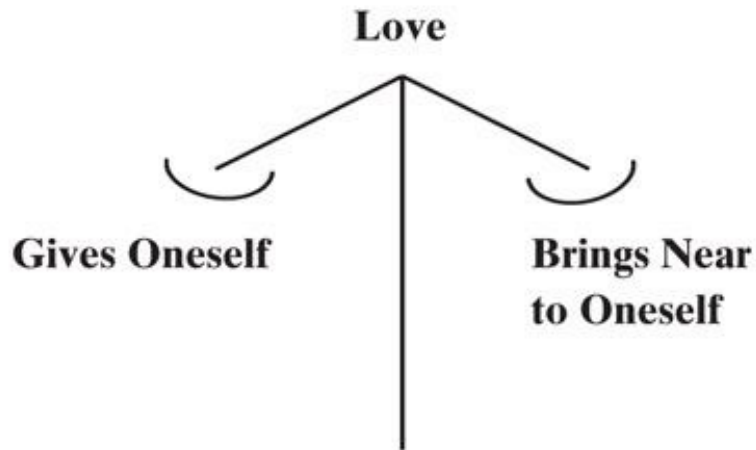
The first commandment teaches us to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, which is the first commandment in weight and dignity.

The second great commandment is to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, but until we learn to love ourselves, we cannot obey God's second commandment, which tells us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

And **the second** is like, namely this, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** There is none other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31).

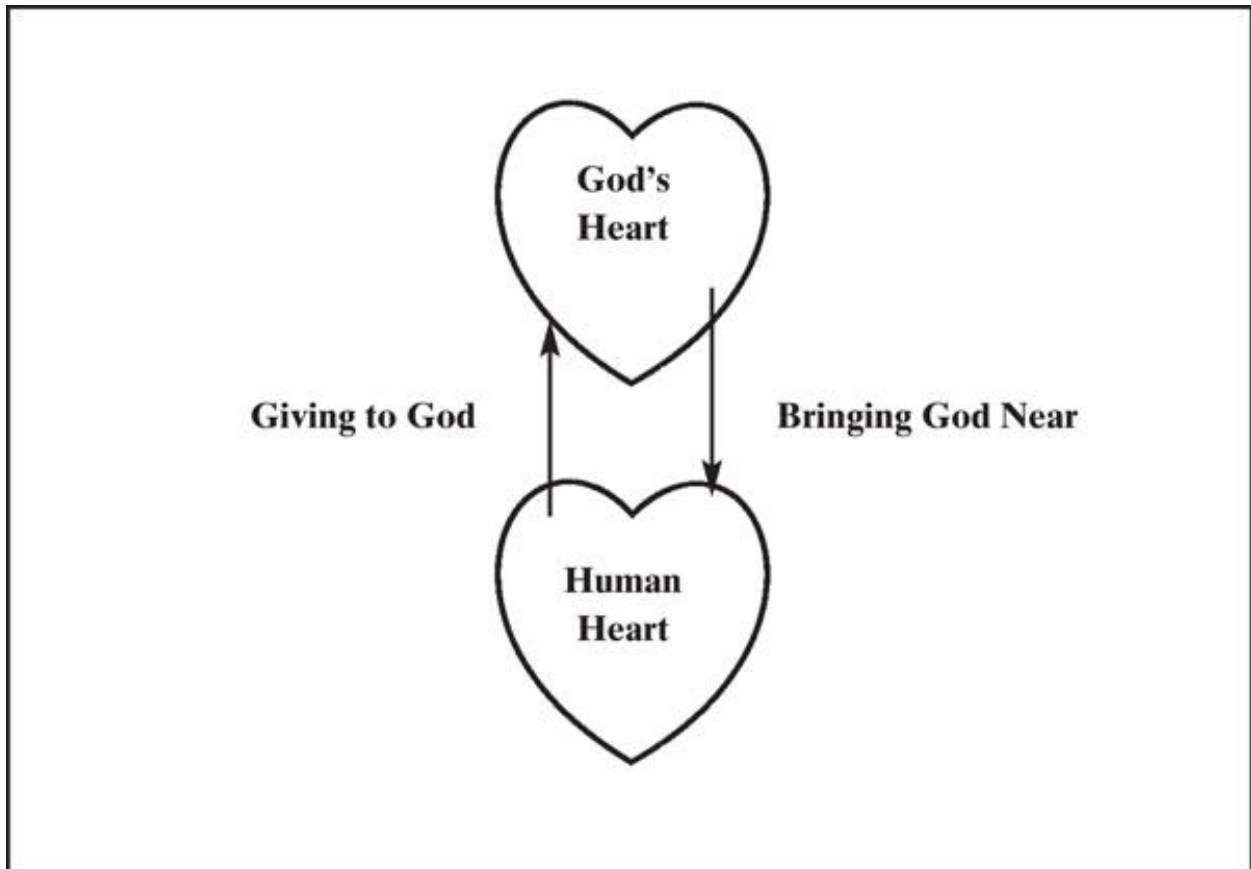
In order to obey the second commandment, we must understand how to obey the first commandment. If we love ourselves, we give ourselves to God and bring Him near to us. In the same manner, we show love to our neighbour by giving ourselves in every way to establish unity and harmony and to bring our neighbour near to us. We cannot teach our neighbour how to love himself if we do not know how to love ourselves by giving ourselves the greatest good, which is the nearness of God.

The Hebrew word for *love* is *awhab*, meaning to have affection for, to give oneself, and to bring near to oneself.



Love is the emotional feeling that causes a person to strive to obtain the closest attachment possible to another person. When we love someone, we give ourselves completely to that person and endeavour to attach that person to us by bringing him or her near to our hearts. Love is the most intimate bond between two hearts.

This explanation of love tells us how we should love the LORD. We should give ourselves completely to Him and bring Him near to our hearts.



We should use every thought, feeling, action, deed, and all our talents, skills, and possessions in giving our hearts in

a greater way to the LORD and in bringing Him nearer to our hearts.

When our eyes of understanding have been opened to the Truth, things have value to us only if they can bring us nearer to the LORD and bring Him nearer to us. We should never seek God with the motive of getting and keeping. The greatest of all good is in giving ourselves completely to the LORD and bringing Him near to our hearts.

**But it is good for me to draw near to God:** I have put my trust in the LORD God, that I may declare all thy works (Psalm 73:28).

David said, in so many words, “But, as for me, God’s closeness is my goodness.” The wicked find pleasure in their alienation from God, but David found his joy and delight in being near to the LORD.

Every one of God’s creatures is an object of His love and care. Thus, we honour the LORD and show forth our love for Him by giving ourselves, our whole existence, as a sacrifice of love to Him, which brings the LORD closer to our hearts. If our emotional feelings do not prepare us to sacrifice our own selfish desires, even in a small way, our feelings are a vain pretense of real love. True love feels the necessity to sacrifice all things to the LORD, even the greatest of our desires.

When we accept the LORD’s “all Love” through His only Begotten Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, we should dedicate all our powers, thoughts, feelings, deeds, and possessions in order to learn how to give our hearts, souls, and strength to Him, thereby making ourselves more and more worthy of His proximity to us. Thus, we always will have the same goal, the same mission, and the same desire to *love (awhab)* the LORD by giving ourselves to Him and bringing Him near to us.

When we understand the meaning of love (*awhab*), we will know how to give ourselves to God and bring Him near to ourselves, and we will love ourselves when we learn to give ourselves the greatest good, which is the nearness of God. Otherwise, we will not have one idea of how to show love to our neighbour, nor will we have any knowledge of how to teach our neighbour to love himself.

Some say that the problem with humility today is that everyone loves themselves too much. But, such a statement is untrue. People who really love themselves desire to be in the closest proximity to God. When a man’s spirit and soul love the LORD God, that man does not destroy his spirit and soul by licentious living that would keep him a great distance from the LORD. On the contrary, when man’s spirit and soul repent and feed upon God’s Spirit and Word of Truth, he draws nigh to God, and God draws nigh to him.

**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded (James 4:8).

The heart that has rebelled must repent and feel the love (*awhab*) of God in Christ Jesus which brings the heart submissively low at the feet of God. The spirit that was at a distance from God and estranged from communion and conversing with God must become acquainted with Him by drawing nigh to Him in love, worship, and adoration. Then, the sweet presence and the mighty power of His Spirit draw nigh to the repentant heart that has drawn nigh to God.

Let us look at some instruction in God’s Word that reveals how real love for self is manifested.

The first step toward drawing nigh to God in love is to separate ourselves from all forces of strife. We cannot abuse and misuse our energies in acts of striving with another and in vying in competition with another, and still draw nigh to God at the same time. We cannot quarrel and struggle with hate and at the same time be drawing nigh to God in love. True love (*awhab*) empowers the soul with strong desires to endeavour, with mighty determinations, to do whatever is necessary according to God’s Purposive Will to avoid conflict and discord.

Abram is the first instructive example in the Bible of one who possessed the class of love necessary to draw nigh to God. He drew nearer to God by separating himself from strife.

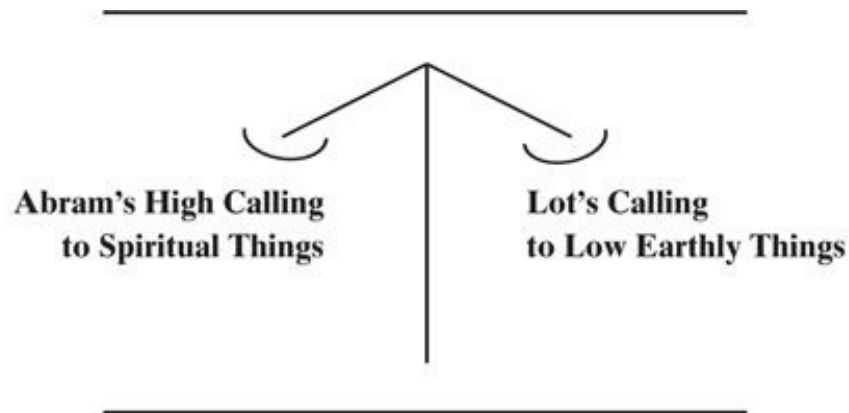
## **I. Love Self by Separating From Strife**

The first way to show love to ourselves is by separating ourselves from fleshly strife. The patriarch Abram loved himself in this manner.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. **And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle:** and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, **Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen;** for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? **separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left** (Genesis 13:5-9).

Abram, in a hospitable and benevolent spirit, had allowed Lot to live close to him. However, instead of being raised from his selfish greed of gain that made him want to be like Abram, who was a source of blessing rather than being a man who lived to obtain blessings, Lot continued to desire to obtain material gain. He wanted all the wealth that Abram had.

Lot did not care to obtain Abram's spiritual high calling. He just wanted to obtain flocks, herds, and tents. Lot accompanied Abram because he profited materially by it. On the other hand, Abram's spiritual high calling was the mission of his life.



Abram's spiritual thoughts and Lot's carnal ideas were diametrically different. Therefore, the land could not bear their remaining together. As far as his affairs were concerned, Lot cared solely about material profits, but Abram's life was devoted to loving the LORD supremely and caring solely about how he could use his profits in serving the LORD and proving his love to Him.

Ultimately, then, strife arose between the herdmen of Abram and Lot because of Lot's greedy desire to obtain what he considered to be the best pasturages. Although Abram maintained a good relationship with Lot at this point, he realized that the strife would remain indefinitely within the circles of the herdmen unless he made a wise choice to separate himself from such fleshly strife.

Abram loved Lot as he loved himself, so he forbade continued strife to affect his personal relationship with Lot. Something had to be done. If the problem could not be resolved peacefully, then the two warring groups had to be separated. When it became evident to Abram that Lot and his herdsmen would not settle the conflict peacefully, he told Lot that they must separate themselves one from the other.

The quarrel was mutual. Abram did not like the carnal motives and ideas of Lot, and Lot did not like the spiritual motive and mission of Abram. Consequently, there was strife between their herdsmen. Where there is no union and harmony, separation brings peace.

So, rather than continuing to live in a state of constant strife which would have robbed him of his peace of mind and rest in the LORD, and rather than allowing the situation to deteriorate into an open fight which would have destroyed his family fellowship with his nephew, Abram offered Lot the first choice of the land. Abram concluded that it was better to separate as men; then, although they would be living diametrically different lives, they would remember that they still were relatives.

After surveying the territory to the left and right, Lot chose the well-watered plains of Jordan and pitched his tent toward Sodom, but Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan. Although the separation was painful, Abram was aware that he must protect his family and servants from Lot's bad example of placing material things above spiritual things. Abram chose a place of isolation in order to go on for God. He did not choose a place of surplus pasturage.

However, Lot chose the place of surplus pasturage and fellowship with the people of Sodom.

Separation is a painful thing for the flesh because flesh has a natural inclination to establish and maintain strong ties with others. But, in spite of the painful separation, it was the kindest, most loving thing for Abram to do for himself since peace could not be achieved in any other way.

Through separation, Abram and Lot both found peace and tranquility in which to pursue their own chosen ways of seeking spiritual things and material things, which they could not do while living in close fellowship. As a result of loving himself enough to separate himself from fleshly enmity and strife, Abram was able to continue serving God and growing in spiritual stature.

Later, when Lot was taken captive by the kings who were the victors in the battle in which Lot was engaged, Abram and his armed servants went to liberate Lot and all the captives, proving that he loved Lot as his own soul. Abram brought Lot back to Canaan's Land to give him another opportunity to choose spiritual things above material things. However, Lot later chose to move inside the city of Sodom, which was a city of wicked sinners.

When the LORD was ready to judge Sodom for its great wickedness, Abraham (as he was then called) had the spiritual stature needed to intercede in behalf of his nephew and his family. Because Abraham loved Lot as his own self, he besought God to have mercy on Sodom and on Lot. In answer to Abraham's prayer, the LORD sent Angels to lead Lot and his two daughters out of the condemned city.

As we go on for God, we, too, must love ourselves enough to separate ourselves from fleshly strife that will destroy us if we cling to it. This is not always easy to do since sometimes very complex issues are involved. Sometimes it is not possible to put great distance between us and the one who is the source of the strife; however, it is totally possible, through the precious Blood of Jesus, for us to separate ourselves from fleshly strife, contentions, and warfare in our own spirit and soul. And, if we love ourselves and our neighbours, we will accept the pain that is involved in separating ourselves from fleshly strife that produces death. We will, in love and gratitude, give our hearts to Christ Jesus for Him to purge and cleanse them of strife and contention, both outwardly and inwardly. Then, when God is brought near to our hearts, we can willingly and gratefully continue separating ourselves from fleshly strife.

## II. Love Self by Submitting to Stay in the Place and Position in Which God Has Put Us

The second way to love ourselves is by submitting to stay in the place and position in which God has put us in this life. An example of this class of love is revealed in the life of Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarai.

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And **when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.** And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And **she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands** (Genesis 16:19).

Abram and Sarai had torn themselves away from their home and relations in order to go to Canaan's Land. After waiting ten years in the Land of Canaan, Sarai felt she could help God achieve His Master Plan by making a sacrifice to give her slave girl, Hagar, for the purpose of raising up a Seed for Abram since she was childless and since God had promised Abram a seed out of his own loins.

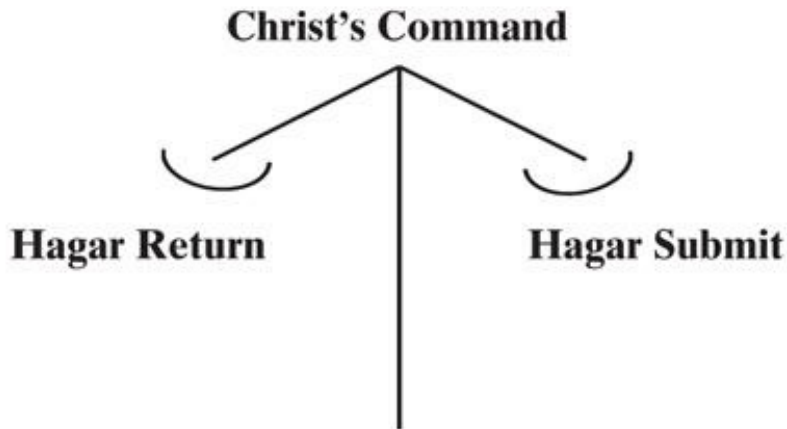
However, after Hagar had conceived, Sarai, the mistress, lost value in her servant's eyes. Now Hagar, the slave girl, considered herself superior to Sarai. Consequently, Sarai suffered many small, petty pricks of Hagar's needling, which disturbed her life and put her heart into a continuous ferment. The quiet, peaceful atmosphere of Sarai's home became so disturbed that her soul became ill.

Petty, needle-like pricks do not kill, but they can make one ill. Hence, Sarai informed Abram that Hagar's arrogance toward her was his fault. When Abram granted Sarai permission to discipline her proud maid, she humbled Hagar by reminding her that, although she had conceived by Abram, she still must remain her "slave-maid."

Instead of humbling herself immediately and accepting this Truth, Hagar fled from Sarai because she could no longer tolerate the idea of being a slave. Hagar took the way which led to the Desert of Shur, the most awful, the most dreary, and the driest of all wildernesses. Consequently, the fountain that Hagar found was a most welcome resting place, which was also used by all caravans going into and coming out of the desert.

The flesh is expert at running away from unpleasant situations. Hagar ran away because she did not want to continue taking the harsh treatment of correction from Sarai, who continually reminded her that she was a slave-maid.

The Angel of the LORD (or Christ in Angelic Form) found the fleeing Hagar by a fountain in the wilderness in the way of Shur. Instead of commending her for making a clever escape, the Angel of the LORD admonished Hagar to return to her mistress and to submit herself under her hands.



Christ gave Hagar a dual command. The first command was to return, to go back to her former place and condition. However, before Christ, the Angel of the LORD, gave His dual command to Hagar, He repeated the same thing that Sarai had said, telling Hagar that she was Sarai's maid and that she should return to her owner. The LORD's Messenger commanded her to return of her own free will and, of her own free will, to submit to her mistress.

God's Purposive Will for Hagar's son Ishmael was for the son to be born and mature under her free-will recognition of Sarai's authority and under her spiritual governance and guidance. For Hagar's free-will returning and free-will subjection to the LORD's Messenger's command, He promised Hagar that she would be the ancestress of countless descendants and that her son Ishmael would be a wild, free man. Hagar willingly returned to her former place and condition. She remained a slave so that Ishmael, in due season, might mature and go free.

Hagar was carrying the child of the richest man, spiritually, in the East, yet she had been barren of the spiritual fruit of love for herself until she had met the LORD's Messenger. The LORD wanted Hagar to love herself in her heart and to prove it by giving herself to God and His Master Plan, which would bring her life. Obviously, when Hagar willingly returned and submitted to Sarai, God drew near to her with His sustaining presence. Because Hagar returned and submitted to Sarai, her life and the life of her child was protected until he could be born and grow to maturity. Thus, both Hagar and Ishmael were made ready for freedom.

The LORD puts His children in unpleasant situations and in lowly positions in order for them to love themselves by giving themselves completely to God's Purposive Will, which is a shield and protection for their lives. If we love our LORD and love ourselves, we will give ourselves to the LORD Jesus Christ Who is the only one Who can protect us and lead us to freedom.

However, we must learn patience, and we must allow Christ to bring forth the spiritual fruit of His long-suffering in us so that we can abide in the place and in the situation in which He has placed us.

To love ourselves means that we will submit respectfully to the authority of those whom God has raised up to positions of rulership over us. In Hagar's case, it was her mistress. For us, it may be a president, a governor, a mayor, a police officer; it may be an employer, a pastor, a companion, or any of a multitude of persons who have been given certain measures of authority over us. We do not really love ourselves if we run away from the unpleasantness of having to bow our human wills and respectfully submit to the authority of another. We do not really love ourselves if we allow ourselves to manifest the lawless, rebellious spirit that is prevalent in our world today.

God exalts people to positions of power and authority and uses them to be schoolmasters, as it were, to teach His children many lessons of surrender, patience, long-suffering, and humility. None of us who are true parents would let our little boy or girl run away from school simply because he or she did not like the second grade teacher's authority. No! We would do just as the LORD's Messenger did with Hagar; we would counsel and work to cause the child to return to school willingly and to come under the teacher's authority.

Likewise, if we love ourselves — that is the spirit and soul that God has given to each of us — we willingly will humble ourselves to the lowest position, making our spirit and soul come under the authority of those in God-given positions of rulership.

The nature of Jesus Christ is humble — not proud, haughty, and rebellious. In the days of His flesh, Jesus willingly humbled Himself under the divine Will of His infinite heavenly Father. He also humbled Himself under the authority of His finite human parents while they had power over Him. He, Who was the Creator of all things, humbled Himself to pay taxes to the carnal Roman government. He humbled Himself by speaking respectfully to Judas, the man who later betrayed Him with a kiss. He humbled Himself under the cruel hands of His enemies who beat Him, smote Him, wounded Him, plucked off His beard, pushed a crown of thorns down upon His precious Head, then nailed Him to the cross.

Although Jesus possessed the power to free Himself, he did not flee from the pain of false judgment, crucifixion, and the humiliation of the Cross. He stayed under the authority of His enemies, taking the lowest position of a sinner in Hell because He loved His Father; He loved Himself; and He loved us, His sinner-neighbours. Therefore, Jesus is our perfect instructive example, showing us that it is possible to submit to all God-given authority.

From His Father, the Son received His reward for all His humility — the clothing of a new kind of resurrection life. On resurrection morning, the Father's Glory brought Jesus Christ out of Hell and Death, exalting Him with new life, and placing Him in a position of all power and all authority at His right hand. The Son of God gave His all — His life — to the Father for a sacrifice for mankind, and He was brought near to the Father.

This is true exaltation! The exaltation of being near the Father comes through humbling one's self under God's mighty hand, when He uses human instruments as our taskmasters.

If we love ourselves, we will want self to go to Jesus Christ's school of humility and to learn of His sweet, humble, submissive nature. Then, when we learn our lessons and pass the tests, we will be eligible to graduate from Christ's school of humility and enroll in His school of exaltation. In Christ's school of exaltation, He uses other classes of schoolmasters to teach us how to be lifted up in Jesus Christ. We must learn to love Him and to love ourselves in both positions. But, we cannot learn the lessons related to Jesus Christ's exaltation and Glory until we have stopped fleeing from God's humility schoolmasters whom He sets over us to teach us the lessons of Christ's Humility.

### **III. Love Self by Delivering Ourselves From a Fretful Spirit**

The perplexing thoughts that arise in the minds of the righteous because of the ascendancy of the wicked and their seeming triumph oftentimes cause the righteous to fret.

Neither are we to fret ourselves because evildoers flourish temporarily because doing so will allow a fretting spirit to lead us astray from the straight way of life and love to God and to ourselves. That people neglect their duty of love to God and to their own selves and still apparently enjoy earthly happiness should not cause us to fret. The seeming good fortune that the wicked enjoy should not make us fretful and agitated, for God is faithful to reward the just and to punish the unjust. If we fret long enough against the wicked, we will beget a desire to walk in their ways. We must not fret over the good fortune of the lawless, lest we fail to see God's justice working, even in the midst of their prosperity.

God's Word teaches us that if we love ourselves we will deliver ourselves from the fretful spirit of the flesh. The Hebrew word for *fret* is *khawraw*, meaning to glow or grow warm, to blaze up in anger, zeal, or jealousy, burn, be displeased, earnestly, fret self, grieve, be or wax hot, be incensed, kindle, be wrath. The Book of Psalms speaks of three degrees of fretfulness from which the self must be delivered.

### **A. Fretting Over Evildoers**

The first class of fretting we experience as a result of our having a carnal mind is that we fret against evildoers.

**Fret not thyself because of evildoers**, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity (Psalm 37:1).

Self frequently becomes inflamed by a fretful spirit because of evildoers, but this fretful anger is not because God's Holy Law has been broken. Anger assails us because of evildoers' success. Villainous evildoers are not satisfied with just committing evil deeds; they seek to subvert and to entice others to imitate their evil ways.

If we are honest, we can trace our fretful spirit back to some pinpoint of envy against the success of the evildoer, or maybe to some arrogant offense he has committed against us in some way. It is God's responsibility, nor ours, to judge the evildoers in His time and in His way.

If we love ourselves, we will deliver ourselves from this class of fretfulness by confessing our sinful anger to the LORD and by repenting and putting it under the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. Once we are free, we can stride forward in our spiritual education and in our moral development.

### **B. Fretting Over the Prosperity of the Wicked**

We may erroneously feel justified in fretting over evildoers, but we also can be guilty of fretting over the prosperity of the wicked, as the Psalmist pointed out.

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: **fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way**, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass (Psalm 37:7).

The Hebrew really reads this way: "Be mute before the LORD and wait with longing for Him. Do not compete with him who prospers, with the man who executes malicious plans." When we realize that God is the head over all things and that He is the governor and guide of our fate, this ends all doubts of God's goodness to us and silences all our fretful, competitive protests against the prosperity of the wicked.

Carnal self frets about the prosperity of others because of its jealous desires to gain riches. If it were possible, carnal self would strip all others of whatever goods they possess in order to increase its own wealth. Since much of this class of jealousy is hidden in the subconscious part of man's being, we must give our hearts to Jesus for discernment and cleansing; then we can offer our hearts upon God's altar of sacrifice as a whole burnt offering. We must let our High Priest, Jesus Christ, open our hearts and cut out the fretful, leprous sores of burning desire for gain that is outside of God's perfect Will for us. If we do not have these fretful, leprous sores of desire for gain, we do not envy the prosperity of others.

When our hearts are delivered from the burning, fretful desire for self-gain, we are free to offer Jesus Christ our cleansed hearts which burn with new love and desire for Him and for His nearness to us. As devoted love-slaves, we are free to enjoy, with Godliness and contentment, whatever measure of natural and spiritual gain our sovereign owner and master sees fit to give us. Therefore, let us not be overwhelmed by present events, but let us wait patiently for future developments which will allow us to see clearly God's Master Plan and Purposive Will in all things.

### **C. Fretting Over the Desire for Revenge**

A carnal heart also can express the self's burning ambition for revenge.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: **fret not thyself in any wise to do evil** (Psalm 37:8).

God beseeches us to give up anger and to forsake wrath and to give up competing with the wicked because it will bring us nothing but harm.

The reason for desisting from evil is because doing so will prevent God's wrath from pouring down upon us. We need to subdue our frustrations, fretfulness, and anger if we have failed to realize all our carnal ambitions. The wicked anger God, so we should fear joining their prosperity because we may also reap their judgment from an angry God. We also must subdue our inner fretfulness and secret desire to seek revenge against evil people who have offended us.

People talk about elephants having long memories, but an elephant's memory is short compared to a person's carnal heart's ability to recall the slightest insult or injury it has received from others. Like a glowing coal of fire, carnal self burns and frets over some real or imagined abuse until finally it bursts forth into a fiery, hot flame of revenge that seeks to avenge itself by devouring its enemy.

The medical world has discovered that many diseases are psychosomatic, which means that a person's physical problem has had its origin in some emotional sore that burns in his or her mind. This class of illness is a result of the mind's producing some evil emotion that burns and frets over something that has happened or that the person imagines has happened until the emotional fire breaks forth to burn in the physical organs of his or her body.

If we love ourselves, we are not going to destroy ourselves by carrying the destructive emotion of fretful revenge in our hearts. Vengeance has not been committed to the flesh. Vengeance belongs to God. Only God can justly repay those who have sinned against Him and us. The LORD is the only one Who is capable and righteous and, therefore, qualified to inflict the proper damage and the correct punishment on everyone who has done wrong.

Instead of carrying a grudge for years and suffering the pain of a burning, fretful spirit that eats away at the vital parts of our being, we can deliver ourselves by turning to Christ Jesus and His precious shed Blood. If we truly love ourselves, we will forgive the person who has sinned against us; we will lay hold of Jesus Christ's peace offering Blood; and we will commit vengeance into God's Hands.

How contrary are God's ways to man's ways. The poor, deceived world thinks that we show love to ourselves by fulfilling every sensual and base desire of our carnal self. But God's Word teaches that we manifest true self-love by separating self from strife. By submitting self to stay in the place and position in which God has put us and to come under the authority of those who have the rule over us. Thus, we can deliver self from fleshly spirits that fret against evildoers, that fret against the prosperity of the wicked, and that fret against situations that prevent self from taking revenge.

The person who practices the true Biblical principle of *loving thyself* will enjoy a paradisiacal walk with the LORD in his own life. He will be able to keep the second commandment by loving his neighbours and strangers as himself, and he also will be able to teach others how to keep the first and second commandments.

