Chapter 134—Love, the Need of the Church

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5). Troubles exist between brethren in the church because they fail to understand what constitutes true Christian charity, brotherly affection, and Christlike love. Self-love and self-esteem lead professed Christians to measure themselves by themselves. They take for granted that all their surmisings and suspicions of others are correct. But it is because of suspicions and judging of one another that there is discord, strife, and an unhealthy condition of the church. 1888 1087.1

If brethren would meet together once or twice a week, and with humble minds, feeling their weakness and realizing their defects, would then ask the Lord to enlighten their understanding and fill their hearts with His love, examining not one another, but the Scriptures, Satan would be defeated. Many imaginary difficulties, mere molehills that have been magnified into mountains and have made barriers between brethren, would vanish, and love, compassion, and respect would take the place of jangling and accusation. When you begin to judge your brethren, you are doing a work God has not given you to do. You are not working with Christ. God did not place you upon the judgment seat to measure and pronounce sentence upon your brethren. 1888 1087.2

Satan is an accuser of the brethren, and when he can set the leaven of dissatisfaction to work in human hearts, he is exultant. When he can divide brethren, he has a hellish jubilee. I think if our brethren could see, as I have seen, how much wrong is done in speaking evil of our brethren, there would be an entire change in the way we treat one another. You do not understand yourselves, you misinterpret words and deeds, and you measure them from your own finite standpoint. Your imagination leads you astray. Your feelings, your tongues, which are not sanctified, are employed in a service and work that is anything but holy and Christlike. 1888 1087.3

We should bring the attractiveness of Christ into our Christian service. The soft beams of the Sun of Righteousness should shine into our hearts, that we may be pleasant and cheerful, and have a strong and blessed influence on all around us. The truth of Jesus Christ does not tend to gloom and sadness. Do not forget, my brethren, that we are in Christ's school to learn lessons of truth and love. We are taught in this school to have faith in our Redeemer. We must attend carefully to our own soul's necessity, improving every privilege provided for us to learn the meekness and lowliness of Christ. 1888 1088.1

We will have to learn that trials mean benefit, and not be discouraged under them. The heart must be disciplined, faith must be cultivated, the soul's endurance must be tested. The simplicity of faith and perfect confidence in God needs to be encouraged in our hearts. You must be constantly looking and talking on the bright side, and while the work of self-discipline must be carried on by every individual Christian, it must be in such a manner as to exalt and ennoble, and not to contract the mind and center it upon little things. Your thoughts should be the outgrowth of holy principles. Do not center your minds on objectionable things, and make a brother an offender for a word. Do not judge him by your own finite measurement. Let the voice of simple, trustful, earnest prayer be heard in your dwellings. When our sisters visit one another, let them not speak words of criticism of their brethren. Let your minds dwell upon the attributes of God, and tell of your experiences in the love of Jesus. The fullness of that love will soothe the heart and cause us to forget disagreeable occurrences. 1888 1088.2

How much sweet peace we lose because we keep poring over the disagreeable items in ourselves and in our brethren. We must look away from the disagreeable to Jesus. We must love Him more, obtain more of His attractive beauty and grace of character, and cease the contemplation of others' mistakes and errors. We should remember that our own ways are not faultless. We make mistakes again and again, and should others watch our every word and every action as diligently as we watch them, they would present a catalogue fully as dark as we are able to present against our brethren and sisters. No one is perfect but Jesus. Think of Him and be charmed away from yourself, and from every disagreeable thing, for by beholding our defects faith is weakened. God and His promises are lost from sight. 1888 1089.1

You need more of Jesus and less of self. Think no evil, talk no evil of anyone. Keep your lips as with a bridle. You cannot measure others' experiences by your own. It would be a deplorable thing if everyone was of the same mind. What if in some respects we do err, does the Lord forsake us, and forget us, and leave us to our own ways? No, the Lord does not treat us as we treat one another. May the Lord help you all to repent and confess, and let the love of Jesus pervade your hearts. Jealousy is all ready to spring into existence at the least provocation. Envy and evil surmising are ready to flourish, ready to grow by being cultivated. Oh, how many hurt the heart of Christ because they want their own way and their own will. War against these unenviable traits of character, and not against one another. 1888 1089.2

If the elements existed in the church which existed in the life of Christ, there would be a firm union among His professed followers. The world is working against the church, seeking to weaken and destroy it. Shall the church imitate the world in this matter? Shall we as church members destroy confidence in other church members because they do not meet a certain standard? The message of the angel to us is, "Press together, press together, press together." Let not Satan thrust himself between the members of the church. Do not give a stroke on the enemy's side of the question to weaken the influence of any member of the church. There will always be agents of the great adversary of souls who are doing their master's work of accusing those who profess to believe the truth. They will relate something that reflects upon the attitude and character of those who profess to be Christians. 1888 1090.1

The seed of evil surmising is frequently dropped into prepared soil, and it produces a harvest after its kind. Those who should guard the interests of those of like precious faith entertain suggestions and reports from the enemies of God and truth, and the root of bitterness defiles many. Could the state of every heart reputed as eminent for holiness be critically examined and developed there would be seen some dark chapters in the experience of those most highly honored. What erroneous ideas of Christian life we would find! What false ideas of God's prerogatives and of His moral government! What limiting ideas of the powers of the Holy One of Israel, what narrow ideas in regard to the agency of the Holy Spirit! 1888 1090.2

I know many are earnestly struggling after a higher life and seeking for clearer views of heavenly things, yet how very slow is their progress! How difficult for the mind to arise to the full assurance of hope that maketh not ashamed! In spite of all our efforts, we are often discouraged because the flesh warreth against the spirit. Let not the common, cheap, earthly things engross the mind that the presence of Jesus shall be withdrawn. The life of the church is communicated from Christ, and we help the church when we work in harmony with the life-giving power, losing sight of ourselves, and

seeking to build one another up in the most holy faith. 1888 1091.1

God may choose instrumentalities that we do not accept, because they do not exactly meet our ideas. They do not work in the very line marked out as perfect, and in place of leaving them with God, for His Spirit to work with them, many begin to present difficulties, barricade the way, and cherish a grieved feeling because they see that they are doing a work that has not been done. Then begins the dissecting of character and the gathering up of tidbits of complaints, and fault-finding and slander, and magnifying of little occurrences and events into grave sins. This has been done in the church until we are weak, and we will always be weak unless this narrow order of things is changed. May the Lord show you all what to do that you may be filled with thanksgiving, gratitude and praise to God for the precious gift of the Son of God, and put away envyings, jealousies and rivalries, that true love and unity may exist. 1888 1091.2

Christ prayed that His disciples might be one even as He and His Father are one. In what does this unity consist? This oneness does not exist because everyone has the same disposition, the same temperament, and thinks in the very same channel. All do not possess the same degree of intelligence. All have not the same experience. In a church there are different gifts and varied experiences. In temporal matters there are a great variety of ways of management, and yet these variations in manner of labor, in the exercise of gifts, do not create dissension, discord, and disunion. 1888 1091.3

One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important, and thus one may present one point, and another, another point, and both may be of highest value. This is all in the order of God. But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance. Satan can sow discord; Christ alone can harmonize the disagreeing elements. Then let every soul sit down in Christ's school and learn of Christ, who declares Himself to be meek and lowly of heart. Christ says that if we learn of Him, worries will cease and we shall find rest to our souls. 1888 1092.1

The great truths of the Word of God are so clearly stated that none need make a mistake in understanding them. When as individual members of the church, you love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself, there will be no need of labored efforts to be in unity, for there will be oneness in Christ as a natural result. The ears will no longer be open to reports that will injure your neighbor, and no one will take up a reproach against his neighbor. The members of the church will cherish love and unity, and be as one great family. Then we shall bear the divine credentials to the world, that will testify that God has sent His Son into the world. Christ has said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one for another” (John 13:35). The divinity of Christ is acknowledged in the unity of the children of God. 1888 1092.2

Brethren, when you humble your hearts before God, you will see that there is danger of Pharisaism in

every church, danger of thinking and praying as did the self-righteous Pharisee: “I thank God that I am not as other men are.” Oh, that there may be a breaking up of the fallow ground of the heart, that the seeds of truth may take deep root and spring up and bear much fruit to the glory of God! My brethren, when you would accuse one of the brethren, consider the words of Jesus, “He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone” (John 8:7). Your sin may not be the particular sin that is under consideration, but Jesus’ words mean that when you are free from sin you may cast the first stone. When Jesus spoke these words to the accusers, their guilty consciences were aroused. They could not answer Him; they were convicted each in his own conscience, and they went out one by one, beginning at the oldest even to the youngest. 1888 1093.1

What can Christ who is so forgiving, so patient with all our mistakes, so rich in mercy and love, think of our hard-hearted criticism and fault-finding? Love for your erring brethren will produce far greater effect in reforming them than all your harsh criticisms. Let all the faults and emotions of the heart be after Christ's order. Let self be put out of sight. The Lord would have the thoughts and the language and the experience of Christian life far more attractive than it is today. If they are not more like Jesus they can never be the light of the world. Our work is between God and our own individual souls. What are you thinking of, my brethren? There is work to be done in the saving of souls around you, and precious time is passing. The hours of probation will soon close. Is your work for the Master of that character that you will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21)? 1888 1093.2

Remember that every soul striving to advance in the divine life finds every inch of ground disputed by an antagonistic force, and he must gird himself for the conflict by earnest prayer, and fight the good fight of faith. He is called to “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). We cannot afford to be found warring against each other. If we make progress in spirituality, we must gird the loins of the mind about with truth, and we must have on the breastplate of righteousness, we must take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Brethren, seek God. Seek Him while He is to be found, call ye upon Him while He is nigh. 1888 1094.1

Oh, what deep, rich experiences we might gain if we were devoting all our God-given ability to seeking knowledge and spiritual strength from God in the place of devoting our powers to hurting one another. Brethren, love one another as Christ has loved you. How little we really know of sweet communion with God! How little we know of the mysteries of the future life! We may know far more than we do know if all our powers are sanctified to discern the character of Christ. There are heights for us to reach, depths of experience to sound, if we are to be the light of the world. Then why dishonor God by contention and strife? Why question and find fault with one another? Why misinterpret and misconstrue the words and acts of your brethren? 1888 1094.2

Is there not better work for you to do than to discourage one another and try to put out the light of your brethren? Oh, rather, let the mind expand that you may take in the heavenly beauties of the blessed promises. Only believe in Jesus and learn in the school of the greatest Teacher the world ever knew, and His grace will act mightily upon the human intellect and heart. His teaching will give clearness to the mental vision. It will give compass to the thoughts; the soul hunger will be filled. The heart will be softened and subdued, and filled with glowing love that neither discouragement, despondency, affliction, or trial can quench. God will open to the mind's eye His preciousness and His fullness. Then let us love and labor. I point you to Christ, the Rock of ages. You can be saved only

through Him. Let the praise of God be upon your lips when you meet together in little companies to worship God. Let all take a part. 1888 1095.1

He who heard the voice of Christ and did His will was the wise man that built upon a rock, and neither storm nor tempest could destroy this structure. Let us be workers with Christ for time and for eternity. Love one another, forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.—Manuscript 24, 1892, pp. 1-9. (“Love, the Need of the Church,” 1892.) 1888 1095.2