

UNDERSTANDING THE LOVE OF GOD SERIES

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

If people are not living right with God you will go to them. You won't leave them alone. Or if your family, your brothers or sisters in Christ are going the wrong way, if you really love them, you will not keep silent. So love is not a compromising love. It is not a love that say, you do what you want and I won't say anything. I won't hurt you. I won't do anything that will cause you to be angry. In other words, it's a human type of love. A fearful type of love. It's afraid that the others may reject us. But this love that comes from God is a love that will correct, this love will seek to correct with the purpose of edifying and building up. Which is what we are going to see here.

Lets look at I Cor.13: 6 *"Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth."* Verse 4 says, *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.* In other words, love is gentle. Galatians 5: 22-23 it says *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."* Gentleness is one of the fruit of love. It's one of the attributes of love.

Lets look at I Peter 4: 8 *"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins."* It does not mean here that love ignores the sins but love seeks to cover it with the purpose of correcting it. It is not just hiding that sin away but it's a protective love. In other words, if I love you and I see something wrong in your life, I will not go to your neighbor and tell them about you, which is what the world does. But I will come directly to you and tell you the

area where I see that it needs to be corrected in order to cover you. See when a person is not walking right with God, in spiritual sense they are like walking naked. So love seeks to cover you. And I come and approach you in order to cover you because your sin may be obvious to others. Your sins will put you to shame. So love seeks to cover. But the fact here is not just correcting. There is a spirit of love in how to correct. See everybody knows how to correct. Everybody knows how to tell another person he or she is wrong. But love has a special way of doing it. It's not just coming to a person and telling him or her you are wrong. It's not just coming to them and says I am right you are wrong.

II Timothy 2: 24 speaking of the servant of God, "*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel.*" So if your correction brings a quarrel, you are not correcting in love. And in fact if you don't have the love of God in your heart, I don't think you should be involved in the art and work of correction. It is not only a work; it's an art. There is a style and way of doing it in love. See the servant of the Lord must not quarrel. A lot of correction that is done brings forth quarrels, brings forth strife. Love has a different method to it. It says *a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach patience* and verse 25 "*in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.*" There is gentleness about the correction in love. And as we grow in Christian life, we have to grow to learn to tell another person in the spirit way, in the Word way in order to improve them. Love will seek to edify the body of Christ.

Phil.1: 9 "*And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.*" The word discernment is translated as judgment. That your love may grow in discernment. This discernment is the judgment of things. It is not a love that is easily deceived. Although I Cor.13 says love believes all things, it does not mean you believe every rumor, you believe everything that people tell you. You have a discerning heart. Phil.1: 9 talks about a love that grows in knowledge and discernment. See the kind of love we are talking about is God's kind of love, not a human kind of love. God's kind of love learns to judge to discern. See some people think it is love to just receive everybody into their home. But that is not love. You have to discern it.

There are other scriptures in the bible where it talks about in the epistle

of John where if a person carries a wrong doctrine, where a person is in the spirit of the anti-Christ, you don't entertain that person. The paraphrase version says don't even have lunch with that guy. So we see that the bible is balanced. You cannot take one aspect of the scripture and go to the extreme. In the same way, not everyone that comes to you and borrows money is walking right with God. Like Jesus says to Judas, the world you always have but Me you do not always have. There is no end to helping. Not everyone who asks you to be his or her guarantor should be accepted. A lot of people have been made bankrupt because they stood guarantee for another guy. So love is discerning. It is not easily deceived. Love believes all things. The meaning behind it is love will seek to believe the best of the person yet love cannot be deceived. It is not the worldly kind of love. Here is a love that must grow. Say, my love must grow in discernment.

Paul says in I Cor. 2 that the spiritual man judges all things. He is not talking about critical attitude. See judging people and judging things are different. We do not judge the people but we judge the things. The difference is judging a person has nothing to do with your life. Judging things has to do with your life. We have to judge things. We have to judge whether something is good for you or bad for you. You have to judge whether a book will edify you or destroy you. You have to judge for example, a TV program is good for your children or bad for your children. You have to make decisions. But the difference in judging things is that, the things that are mentioned involved the circumference of your life. When it comes to judging people who has nothing to do with you, you are what Paul called a busybody. Where you just try to meddle with other people affair where it has nothing to do with your life. So that's why Jesus said, *judge not, that you be not judged* in Matthew 7 verse 1 and in verse 2, *for with the measure you use it, it will be measured back to you*. We have to have a love that discerns things around us. When we discern we have to pass judgment on things. When you say that someone is not walking right, that means you have a ruler to measure his walk with God. Knowing this is not enough for you will also need the key to bring the correction to him or her. How do you edify and speak the truth in love? This is the aspect which we are going to focus this morning. Jesus used an important key called parables.

Lets look at the reason why Jesus used parables in Matthew 13. If you read the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you cannot help but be struck with the fact that Jesus uses parables in the major portion of His teaching. The

reason why He uses it, He Himself tells us in verse 10-11, *“And the disciples came and said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.’”* We have seen how love speaks the truth in love. Now we look at the aspect of how to speak the truth in love, which is what I call parable. Jesus said I speak unto them in parables. In verse 34, *“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables, and without a parable He did not speak to them.”* In other words, He spoke to them only in parables. To the multitudes He only used parables. The teaching that you gather in the gospel where He teaches explicitly on His coming and all the details of it and its interpretation of some parables was among the close circle. Then He explained it unto them. But to the rest who did not follow Him, the only word He has for them is parable. And if you ever read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you will always wonder why does He do it. Today we are going to see that.

Why did Jesus speak in parables? Jesus gave us the answer in Matthew 13: 12 onwards, *“For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”* Now He lays the foundation. Remember we are touching on why Jesus speaks in parables. How many of you ever wondered why Jesus spoke in parables? Jesus said to him that has, more would be given. That’s the foundation. See a parable brings forth in you what you have. Keep that thought in mind as we read on. In verse 13, *“Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”*

Now it looks as if Jesus purposely spoke in parable so that they cannot believe. That is what you get superficially. Here are the multitudes and here are His disciples. To His disciples He spoke plainly. He explained many things to them when they don’t understand. But to the multitude, He only speaks in parables. Thank God we are among His disciples and not among the multitudes. It looks as if Jesus purposely does it so that they cannot come to Him but that’s not what Jesus said. If people cannot hear, cannot understand, the responsibility is on them. Look

at verse 15; *their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed*. They had closed themselves up. You see God doesn't waste time with people who are not interested in Him. There are people out there in the world that God is blessing with the natural blessings. Who do not know God? Some of them curse God. Some of them do not believe in God. God does not waste time with people who are not interested in Him but those who are interested in Him, whether they be a Cornelius seeking God, somehow the gospel will get to him. God seeks those who seek Him. Those who do not seek God, God do not waste His time. The reason is God knows that if they are not hungry for Him and they don't seek after Him, even if He manifest to them, it will be worse for them. Their rejection for God will be even greater. It will make it harder for them to come to God. God wants everybody to come to Him.

A parable has a quality of making you think and make your own decision. That's a special quality of a parable. See a parable causes you to make your decision, but if Jesus compels them to come, it wouldn't be by their own decision. It would have been His. A parable has a quality of making you reach a conclusion by your freewill. So Jesus wants them to come by their own freewill. If they wanted to understand the parable, it's very simple. Just be one of His disciples. A parable serves to stir. If they have any desire for God, if they have any hunger for God, the parable will stir in them so much. They may not sleep and they may not eat. They will come and be a disciple and say: Jesus, tell me. It's just like Moses' burning bush, the bush was burning but there was no voice yet. Moses saw from afar and say, I will go and see that bush and see why it burns and yet it is not consumed. When he drew near, God spoke to him. That is the nature of God.

Luke 24, you see how the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. After Jesus spent the time with them, and they still didn't recognize that it was Jesus. Time to check into the hotel, Jesus made as if to go on. That is the quality and attribute of God. He wants us to make that choice to invite Him to seek after Him. A parable has that special quality of making you reach a decision by yourself. If they did not understand anything, there will be something in that parable that will stir in them and will cause them to come to Him. Like Jesus says, cast not the pearl to the swine for they will come against you and destroy you. Jesus was doing what He preached. See He reserved certain truth for those who will make a commitment. Even now it is the same. If you made a fifty percent commitment with God, God

can only work in your life fifty percent. God's revelation will only flow fifty percent. If you make a ten percent commitment then He works only at ten percent. God knows the percentage of our commitment. God can only work through that amount of commitment that you gave. But if you give 100% commitment, God could show Himself more to you. See the more committed you are to God, the more God can show Himself to you. So here His disciples were committed to Him and there the multitude outside say it's a good story and go off. Many multitudes will come, get their healing and go off. They get what they want. They don't want to change their life. They don't want to follow Him. They just go off. But here will be many of them asking, what's the meaning of this. And there is a hunger that stir and they began to come and ask Jesus. They want to learn more.

See a parable has a quality of making a person making a decision. And this is how love operates. Love is gentle. Paul says a servant of God must not quarrel but must be gentle in humility, correcting those who stray from the truth. See if I love you, I will not come to you and say, "You rascal, repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand." If you want to do that you might as well go and eat locust and honey and wear a camel skin. That will frighten the wits out of them. Love has a way of coming to a person and helping them to see them as they are rather than you tell them what they are. We have to learn that. It is not natural with our flesh. It is easier for us to just say you are wrong. I am right. That settles the issue. But it doesn't settle the relationship. See love builds bridges. But human beings build walls. Love values a relationship and so love seeks to cause a relationship. Love has a way of bringing a person in. It's what I call the parable style.

We have some examples in the bible; one of the classic examples is in II Samuel 12. There you see the operation of the parables. David had committed adultery with Uriah's wife and he has caused Uriah to be killed in battle. Now the Lord knows all about it and in II Samuel 12: 1 *"Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: there were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor."* Now here is the parable, look at the situation here. If Nathan had come straight to David and said, "You rascal, you adulterer, you murderer," David may have reacted and instead of turning David to the Lord, he may have turned David worse against the Lord. Now you began to see the use of parables. See parables don't rub against your brain. It rubs along your brain to bring you to the Lord. See that is what love does. It seeks to come down to your level to understand the hurts,

the heartaches because everybody who is in sin and everybody who is in bondage, do you know they suffer? They may not know it but they are suffering. Their conscience is troubled; they are having sleepless nights, etc. Love comes down to the level of the suffering and says, "I understand your suffering." Love comes down to the level of suffering and from here brings you up. You better learn how to correct in love because every single one of you will have to correct another person somewhere, some place.

The problem is, it has never been taught. You don't know Jesus' style, the parable style. It doesn't mean that you have to go and cook up a parable somewhere. Just take the principle and learn how to do it. If God gives you a parable to tell then do it, otherwise learn to use the parable principle. See Jesus Christ, how did He turn us to God? Did He just remain on His throne in heaven and say, "You sinners come up here. "? No, He came down in the flesh and lived among sinful men and yet without sin. He understood the temptation we all go through, He understood the heartache, the pain and all that we have gone through. He understands and from there He brings us up and say, "You can come up here." That's the principle of Jesus' correction. So Nathan came to David. See the approach is important when you correct. You have to learn to speak the truth in love. Not just speak the truth. Many people know how to speak the truth but the way they speak the truth, there is no spirit of truth. The spirit of truth is called a spirit of love. It's not just speaking the truth, it's speaking the truth in love in Eph.4: 15.

Here Nathan came, he is going to speak the truth in love. He could have come to David and said, "You adulterer, you cruel murderer," and every word he said would have been true in that situation but it would not have helped David. He came to David and he said, *there were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished, and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.*"

Nice parable. David starts thinking about these two men. The poor man have only one tiny little lamb, the rich man have the whole herd and the rich man had a visitor. And instead of taking from his flock, he came to this poor man who had only one and grabbed it from him and used it for the feast. You know what David did? He reacted. Verse 5, *“So David’s anger was greatly aroused against the man.”*

How can this man do it? How can he be so cruel? David said to Nathan, *as the Lord lives, the man who had done this shall die.* Now looks what had happened? The parable has caused David to think and make his decision of what is right or wrong. He knows it’s wrong and he reacted with righteous indignation. He was greatly aroused. He said this man shall die. He has already concluded the principle. He knows right and wrong. Verse 6 *“And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.* Verse 7, *“then Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man!’”*

You see David is not defenseless. What happened is that through a parable Nathan through the Spirit of God had helped use his judgment that he use on others on himself. See we know it’s wrong for others to do it but we put a double standard. We never do it on ourselves. And how the parable has helped David was that parable has helped him use the judgment. What he has in him. Remember Jesus said about His use of parables, what a man has shall increase. That’s the use of a parable. The parable takes what is inside. All those things that is right with God. Your conscience and all those things that has been developed. Discerning of good and evil. It brings it up with you and it helps you to judge yourself. Paul says if I judge myself then I shall not be judged. That’s how a parable does it. When a person is wrong, remember inside them there is a conscience that tells them it’s wrong. And the Spirit of God must in many ways have been telling them that are wrong. All you have to do is through a special principle and a way brings them to see the light they already have instead of you shining a torch light on them and saying, *“You are wrong.”* That is the parable principle in correction.

And Nathan explained the parable and gave the word of the Lord. If verse 7 had come in verse 1, there may not be the story we have. See what happened was David was saved. David was turned to the Lord instead of against the Lord. See how love operates. Finally in verse 13, *“David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.”* Now he did not say I have sinned before that. Now he recognized his own sin. And the advantage of the parable principle is that a person is helped to self-

realization. Do you know that self-realization and repentance is a strongest factor to transforming a life? No matter what I tell you that you are wrong, unless you yourself realize you are wrong, all my telling will still be wasted words. People changed because of self-realization. The prodigal son who was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pig's food, the bible says he came to himself and said, my father's servant has more than this. I will arise. Before that there have been many people that try to turn him to the right way but to no avail until he realized. Then there was the power to change. Unless you see it, there is no power to change. The power to change arises from the spirit of a man. That's the power of love it can change life. It changes life; it builds life for the better.

II Kings 13, this is applying the principle but not so much the parable. Verse 14 onwards, *“Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen! And Elisha said to him, take a bow and some arrows. So he took himself a bow and some arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, put your hand on the bow. So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. And he said, Open the east window, and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot; and he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them. Then he said, Take the arrows; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, Strike the ground; so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it. But now you will strike Syria only three times. Then Elisha died, and they buried him.*

Elisha now lying on his bed about to go home and here come king Joash. It looks very peculiar isn't it? What has those striking of the arrows on the ground to do with his defeat of Syria? But what it brings forth was the heart of the king of Israel. See he was not ignorant of what the arrows mean. It was explained to him. He was first asked to shoot the arrows. So Elisha is now explaining the representation. The arrow is now representing deliverance and an attack on the Syrians. So the arrows have now been spiritualized and symbolized as deliverance from the Syrians. Verse 17, he said the arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria. So the arrow has been explained to him as a Syrian. And after he shot the arrow, the next thing he told him was, strike the

arrow on the ground. Remember he has been given enough information. The arrow represents Syria. And he just took the arrow and shot three times. The man of God got angry. You should have struck five or six times, now you only struck three times. You see, in the heart of the king of Israel was an attitude towards the Syrians. For example, if I were to ask James to hit a rat that run across this place and I tell James could you strike this rat for me. If James was lover of rats, won't you think it would be difficult? If he kept that rat in his home and everyday he just say, hello Mickey Mouse and feed it. Would James be able to come and hit the rat? I don't think so. Let say if Brother Amos, if he hates rats and he has been killing rats and also has been known as a number one rat's killer. If I tell him to kill the rat, even before I say go, he already killed it. Now what happens? The striking brings forth the attitude of the heart.

See the parable principle Jesus defined in Matthew 13: 10 When His disciples said why did you speak in parables. Jesus told them for what a man has is brought forth and if he is good more shall be given. It brings forth from what is in a man. And in II Kings 13, the king of Israel had a certain attitude towards the Syrians. See many of the Israelites king are that way. King Ahab was the same way. King Ahab also at one time almost had victory over the Syrians but instead he let the Syrian king go. He made friends with him. In fact he had the king of Syria surrounded but he released him and said, "Come out my brother to my chariot." They were God's enemies. When Elisha gave a clue to the king of Israel, he did not leave him ignorant. He gave him a warning. When he shot the arrow the first was an indicator, the arrow of deliverance over the Syrians and if Joash was really keen to do the will of God, he would have shot all the arrows. See in the Old Testament sometimes God tells them to do something, just like God told David to destroy the Philistine. God told king Saul to destroy the Amalekites but he did not. If the king of Israel was interested in doing the will of God, he would have realized that the Lord was telling him now if you don't destroy them now, they will be a thorn in the flesh and they will destroy you back. Finally he was given the arrow that represents Syria and he shot. Now if the arrow had represented Syria, how he strike it would bring forth his intention, his zeal and his feelings about Israel. And it will also reveal his zeal to do the Lord's will. So here are the arrows that represent Syria, what he does to the arrows will represent his attitude, his inwards zeal to carry out what God wants to do to the Syrians. He just took the arrows and shot three times. That's why the man of God was angry. He said, you should have broken the arrows. These arrows represent the Syrians. He did not break the

arrows.

If I give you a stick and say, "This stick represents the devil. Now strike the stick." How you strike the stick determines your anger against the devil. Your reaction to the stick represents your reaction to the devil. It brings forth what is inside you. That is the love way of correction. It seeks what is good in you and brings it out. To correct what is bad in you I become a catalyst. See a catalyst is a chemical that causes the reaction in other chemicals because of his presence. It itself does not react but it cause a reaction. So love is a catalyst for change in people's life because you come to them in love. The way you use your words, the way you talk to them it causes the good in them to come out to correct the bad in them. Love recognizes the good in people. Remember the first attitude in correction, "You rascal, you adulterer, and you murderer." What does it do? It completely rejects the potential of a person. It has completely written that person off and places him in the bin with the label, "Not good anymore." See when a person takes such an attitude in correction, they are actually writing off a person.

Do you know that Jesus never given up on anyone? He didn't give up on Paul when he was persecuting the church. I have taken this attitude, no matter how hard a person is to change, as long as Jesus don't give up, I won't give up. Why does Jesus not give up? He sees the good and the potential in others. Love has a way of bringing up that potential so that you end up correcting yourself and I am just a catalyst. That's how a parable principle works.

Look at Matthew 13: 12 Jesus said, "*for whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance, but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables.*" See it has a quality of bringing out what is in a person. If it's not there, it won't bring it forth. If it's there, it will bring it forth. The most marvelous thing about principle of a parable is, it causes you to have self-judgment. If there is good in you, it will bring it forth and you will judge yourself and God will be just standing by to receive your repentance. When we correct someone in the spirit of love, he or she will reach out for your hand of love. Everybody wants to be loved and correction must not be accompanied with rejection. That is why I offer to you the truth of speaking the truth in love. We have to learn the skill of love. We live in an imperfect world;

there are imperfect people around us. Do we have an attitude of superiority or do we have an attitude of love where we seek to build others up? Do we seek to bring them up in Christ? And as long as we are living in an imperfect world and among imperfect people and among a body of Christ this is still not finished yet. There will always be many opportunities to correct and to improve.

And it is not just what to correct; it is how to correct. That is the important key. A lot of corrections that people have given are destructive. Some of you have been through that. So have I. In my younger days when I started the ministry, I wished people who have known me had led me instead of crushing me. I may have done something wrong but the joy is having someone to lead not to crush you. How do you correct another one? How do you personally correct, we have to examine ourselves. And you have to make a decision as to how you are going to correct another person when we have the opportunity. No wonder we have to pray before we can ever do it. It's easy you just tell another person he is wrong. But to build him up from where he is wrong into where he is right is different.