

## Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear

### There is No Fear in Love

1 John 4:18 “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

We all wish to be perfect in love, but we cannot do that if we fear, and unfortunately, we can be afraid of anything. As a teenager, I started making a list of everything that I feared. Drugs, alcohol, being unloved, being unwanted, messing up, needles, spiders.

After filling a couple pages, I realized that the exercise could go on forever. There is no limit to the things we can fear. We can be afraid of everything. Satan knows that better than anyone. Fear hath torment. No one leverages that better than satan. If he can cripple us with fear, he has won.

So how do we get rid of fear? Love. More love. More love for God and more love for those around us, because we can't love God if we don't love our brothers and sisters here.

19 “We love him, because he first loved us.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth **not** his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”

### Do We Choose to Love Our Brother?

We cannot truthfully claim a deep love of God if we hold on to hate for those around us. Many years ago, I met a girl who proudly ticked off on her fingers all the people that she hated, including her mom, her brother and one of her step parents. I remember at the time wondering if she realized what she was saying. She seemed so proud of it. As if hating them made her powerful. Did she mean what she said? Did she really hate them?

Words are a powerful thing. We mortals like to abuse words. We like to say we hate something, when often what we really mean is that we don't understand it, or that we were hurt, or confused, or offended, or that we just don't agree. But the more we claim that hate, the more we'll believe it's true. Let us choose to set aside hate. Misunderstandings can be cleared up. Hurt can be healed, offense can be overcome, but the only way to get rid of hate is to choose to set it aside, to choose love instead.

Fear and hate do not make us powerful, they make us weak.

2 timothy 1:7 “For God hath **not** given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Fear is not Godly. Power does not come from fear.

In Helaman 5, Nephi and Lehi are imprisoned for their preaching and converting. After they are encircled about by fire and a voice is heard from the heavens, those who witnessed the miracle went about, telling of their experience and converting even more souls. The result of this conversion was this:

Helaman 5:51 “And as many as were convinced did lay down their weapons of war, and also their hatred and the tradition of their fathers.”

They laid down their hatred. They didn't demand retribution, or even an apology, they just laid it down. That is our choice. We can choose to lay down our hatred, our anger, our hurt, and all our broken pieces. We can choose to lay them down at the Lord's feet.

We have agency and we must use it well. That means not only choosing good and taking responsibility for our choices, but it means respecting the agency of others. Even if you are completely right about something, that does not give you license to force your view on someone else. It's ok to disagree. It's ok to walk different paths. It's not ok to use force or unrighteous dominion. It is not ok to compel. Choose truth. Teach truth, and let others make their choice.

2 Nephi 10:23 “Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves--to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life.”

### **Do We Choose God?**

How else can we love God? How else can we choose God?

Moses 7:33 “And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.”

To love one another and to choose God go hand in hand. We are **commanded** to do both. No matter how diligently we seek the face of God, if we hold on to our hate, we are not choosing God.

Being commanded to love is one thing, actually doing it is another. But how do we love those who have hurt us? Or rejected us?

### **Overcoming Hurt with Love**

We have all suffered offense and hurt. And in the midst of that hurt, it's easy to lose sight of our relationship with the Lord if those who **should** be loving us unconditionally have decided to set us aside. So while we seek God's love in order to forgive, we must also remember that despite the choices of whatever group we identify with, nothing can stand in the way of our relationship with Father and with Christ. If you feel you have been cast out, by your friends, or your family, or your church, do not let that come between you and the Lord.

Remember your agency. You are free to choose.

Alma 33:2 “And Alma said unto them: Behold, ye have said that ye could not worship your God because ye are cast out of your synagogues. But behold, I say unto you, if ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, ye do greatly err, and ye ought to search the scriptures; if ye suppose that they have taught you this, ye do not understand them.”

The lord does not require a synagogue for us to worship in. What the lord has asked if us is a broken heart and a contrite spirit. He's asked us to believe in him and be baptized.

3 Nephi 11:33 “And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

The only person who can keep us from God is ourselves. That's the beauty of Joseph Smith's legacy. When we lack, we go to God. When we hurt, we go to God. When we anger, we go to God. When we are confused, we go to God. **We** have to stand at the door and knock. No one else can do it for us. We can't send a messenger. We can't ask a priest to do it for us. We have to stand at that door and ask for entrance.

### **Knocking**

2 Nephi 9:42 “And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches--yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them.”

We want the Lord to open the door for us. But he cannot if we are puffed up. What are we puffed up in? Because we're all puffed up in something. Is it our knowledge? Do we think we know it all? Is it the image we project to those around us? Are we striving to LOOK righteous instead of BE righteous? Are we puffed up in our money, or a special talent we possess? Whatever it is, we have been told to cast it away. Because if we show up, knocking at the door, still clinging to our pride, he cannot open the door.

It can be a scary thing to give those things up. They make us feel secure and in control in this uncertain world. It's the same way with our unbelief.

And what is unbelief? I used to think that unbelief was the same as non-belief, but that's not the case. Unbelief is false belief. It's a belief in something that simply isn't true. And no matter how passionate we are about defending our beliefs, if they aren't true, they're not going to help us. That goes right back to Helaman 5:51 and

laying down the traditions of our fathers. We all inherit traditions, but it's our responsibility to determine whether or not they are true. It can be a frightening thing, but the Lord has asked us to seek the truth anyway.

2 nephi 9:40 "O, my beloved brethren, give ear to my words. Remember the greatness of the Holy One of Israel. Do not say that I have spoken hard things against you; for if ye do, ye will revile against **the truth**; for I have spoken the words of your Maker. I know that the words of truth are hard against all uncleanness; but the righteous fear them not, for they love the truth and are not shaken."

We should not fear truth. We all like to be right, we hope to be right. It's just another part of our mortal nature. But in order to learn truth from God, we have to stop being afraid of discovering that we were wrong. We have to practice letting go of falsehoods. Take satisfaction in identifying truth and letting those truths replace your unbelief. Reviling against the truth isn't going to make it false. The Lord speaks against all uncleanness. We can cling to our unbelief as tight as we want, but Truth will still condemn us. So instead of being mad that our uncleanness is being condemned, let us strive to be rid of it. Choose to let it go. Lay it at the Lord's feet.

God is a God of truth, and if we fear truth, then we will fear Him. And we know that fear hath torment.

2 nephi 27:25 "Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men—"

It is the precepts of *men* that teach us to fear God. It is the teachings of *men* that tell us we cannot go to the Lord ourselves. Men convince us to praise God with our words but hide our hearts from Him out of fear. The truth is that we should continue to honor the Lord with our words, but ultimately what the Lord really wants is our hearts. He wants us to come to a point where we can declare like Moroni, "I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear." (Moroni 8:16)

## Fear God?

Now there's a little quandary, because many writers in the Book of Mormon state that they DO fear God. Or they preach that others SHOULD fear God.

"Work out your salvation with fear before God." Alma 34

"The Nephites did not fear them; but they **did** fear their God." 3 Nephi 4

"I do not fear your power nor your authority, but it is my God whom I fear; " Alma 60

How do we reconcile that? We're not supposed to fear, but these men of God are admitting fear and sometimes encouraging fear.

Fear **of God** may be used as a tool in some cases, but before I talk about that, I want to point out that if we are motivated by fear of anything **but God**, we're going to get ourselves into trouble. Fear of man leads either to worshipping them as idols, or allowing ourselves to be manipulated by them, or both. It strips us of our agency and enslaves us to this world. **Fear of men** will lead us away from God, not toward him. Fear of men puts man between us and God and acts as a barrier.

So then how can fear of God be a good thing? How can it be recommended by prophets throughout the scriptures? Enos used fear of the Lord to motivate his people to not completely destroy themselves.

Enos 1:23 "And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things—stirring them up continually **to keep them in the fear of the Lord**. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction."

When a society has fallen into wickedness and chaos, sometimes it's necessary for a prophet of the Lord to pound the fear of God into them. And even then, the only thing this accomplished was to prevent their utter destruction. It did not lead to salvation or raise them to a higher plain, it only restored a little order.

Fear of God cannot exalt us, and it will not bring us into the presence of the Lord. In order to rise up to meet our Savior, we must get rid of our fear.

And the way that we do that is to replace it with love. Perfect love casteth out fear.

Let me ask: who is perfect love?

Christ is perfect love.

When we invite Christ into our lives, when we do His will, when we fill ourselves with the light of Christ, our fear will be cast out.

**He** will cast out our fear. And when that fear is gone and we are made whole in Him, then we will have no more reason to fear God because—like King Benjamin’s people—we will have no more disposition to do evil.

Mosiah 5:2 “And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”

We must allow the Spirit of the Lord to cause a mighty change in us. We must continually seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, allowing the light of Christ to work within us.

And THEN we can be filled with perfect love, with love **unfeigned**.

### **Loving Like a Little Child**

The Lord has good reason for commanding us to be as little children.

3 Nephi 11:37 “And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and **become as a little child**, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and **become as a little child**, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”

Little children love without limits, they forgive easily and they are very often fearless. Little children have perfect love because it comes without judgement and without reserve.

We have a story in my family from before I was born and my parents only had two kids. They were driving on I-15, along a long stretch of desert road when a biker gang came up behind them. My dad could see in the rear view mirror that they were Hells Angels and that they were passing the other cars very aggressively, almost like they were picking a fight. This made him more than a little nervous and he told my mom that they needed to just look straight ahead, don't make eye contact. He didn't want any trouble. But as this big group of bikers came up behind them and started passing, he noticed that most of them were waving. He and my mom were utterly flummoxed, but they didn't dare wave back.

Finally after all the bikers has passed, my oldest sister, who was about 3-years-old at the time, says, "Daddy, those were nice mens! I was waving at them and they waved back!"

She wasn't afraid of them. She didn't know that men who road motorcycles were supposed to be tough and dangerous. She didn't judge them for their leather jackets or tats. They were just people, and she treated them with the loving enthusiasm of a child.

1 John 4:7 "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Love others. Don't just act like you love them. Don't love them only when you are in direct communication, but love them always—even if they post something dumb on FB, even if they refuse to understand you—strive to have loving thoughts about them. Love them even when they aren't affected by it. Love them when you speak of them to others. Love them when you disagree. Love them when they make huge mistakes. Love them when you are ashamed of your own mistakes.

2 Nephi 9:41 "O then, my beloved brethren, come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it



lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name.”

1 John 4:11 “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

Let Christ into your heart. Let his perfect love cast out your fear.