

WHEN LOVE GROWS COLD

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Perhaps the tendency emerges within even the strongest of God's people on a rare occasion. Jeremiah, a man of unquestioned spiritual strength and powerful example, once wrote, "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20:9). The observation generally is true that, if all the members of the church in any given area were to converge on the meeting place at one of the service times, the place would be packed to overflowing. Apparently, one reason for empty seats is because someone's love may have grown cold.

Symptoms of Dying Love

Seven symptoms of dying love may be catalogued. One, an individual's prayers become mundane, canned, routine, or artificial. If within a family, the children may come to think the word "amen" means "let's eat." Two, worship has lost its luster. It is reduced to a dull duty, even a dreaded obligation. Three, financial support of the church is non-existent, or the discussion of it is even offensive. Four, sermons are viewed as too strong. The person may even complain that the preacher is lacking in tact and finesse when he is discussing sin. Five, sympathy for differences in viewpoints between people caught up in worldliness and denominational error grows into rigid silence. Six, discontentment with the church in general because of a desire for something new, fresh, or just different. Seven, absenteeism.

Sources for Reviving Love

Selected, thought-provoking scriptures on the subject may give life again to love. For example, Peter sat outside the palace as Jesus was giving defense of his deity and for it was receiving rebuke, ridicule, and rancor, and the damsel said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." Peter denied before them all saying, "I know not what thou sayest" (Matt. 27:58-75). In addition, Peter led his former partners in the fishing business and other disciples back into his old profession by saying, "I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee" (John 21:3). While these passages show even personnel critical to the salvation of the world may have

wavered, their love revived even to the point of bravely enduring persecution (Acts 4:21, 29), punishment (Acts 5:40-42), and even death (Acts 7, 12).

Paul's reminder in Romans 6:2 and the surrounding context was aimed at pointing the Romans to Jesus Christ. He said, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" If even the slightest glimmer of love remains, who could resist the motivation from the peerless apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13-15 to release the past, reach out to the future, and receive the reward of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus"?

The sources for reviving love are sobering as is illustrated in Paul's last words to Timothy, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8). In addition, a statement of Christ's is very thought provoking, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

Strength for Maintaining Love

The strength to maintain love is readily available. Many memorize Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." In urging the readers not to give up, the writer of Hebrews said, "Let your conversation [conduct, ASV] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). While in this vale below, God's people through the eye of faith need to look up and see the door of heaven opened by studying Revelation 4. The careful consideration of that eternal realm which is the throne of God and the abode of the angels will find attractive the invitation as the apostle John heard to "Come up hither" (Rev. 4:1 ff.).