

The next ingredient is a very remarkable one: ***Good Temper***. “Love is not easily provoked.” Nothing could be more striking than to find this here. We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man’s character. And yet here, right in the heart of this analysis of love, it finds a place; and the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature.



The peculiarity of ill temper is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. You know men who are all but perfect, and women who would be entirely perfect, but for an easily ruffled, quick-tempered, or “touchy” disposition. This compatibility of ill temper with high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics. The truth is there are two great classes of sins--sins of the *Body*, and sins of the *Disposition*. The Prodigal Son may be taken as a type of the first, the Elder Brother of the second. Now society has no doubt whatever as to which of these is the worse. Its brand falls, without a challenge, upon the Prodigal. But are we right? We have no balance to weigh one another’s sins, and coarser and finer are but human words... No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to un-Christianize society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood; in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone. Look at the Elder Brother, moral, hard-working, patient, dutiful--let him get all credit for his virtues--look at this man, this baby, sulking outside his own father's door. “He was angry,” we read, “and would not go in.” Look at the effect upon the father, upon the servants, upon the happiness of the guests. Judge of the effect upon the Prodigal--and how many prodigals are kept out of the Kingdom of God by the unlovely characters of those who profess to be inside? Analyze, as a study in Temper, the thunder-cloud itself as it gathers upon the Elder Brother's brow. What is it made of? Jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, touchiness, doggedness, sullenness--these are the ingredients of this dark and loveless soul. In varying proportions, also, these are the ingredients of all ill temper. Judge if such sins of the disposition are not worse to live in, and for others to live with, than sins of the body. Did Christ indeed not answer the question Himself when He said, “I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you.” There is really no place in Heaven for a disposition like this. A man with such a mood could only make Heaven miserable for all the people in it. Except, therefore, such a man be born again, he cannot, he simply cannot, enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For it is perfectly certain-- and you will not misunderstand me--that to enter Heaven a man must take it with him.

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You will see then why Temper is significant. It is not in what it is alone, but in what it reveals. This is why I take the liberty now of speaking of it with such unusual plainness. It is a test for love, a symptom, a revelation of an unloving nature at bottom. It is the intermittent fever which bespeaks unintermittent disease within; the occasional bubble escaping to the surface which betrays some rotteness underneath; a sample of the most hidden products of the soul dropped involuntarily when off one's guard; in a word, the lightning form of a hundred hideous and un-Christian sins. **For a want of patience, a want of kindness, a want of generosity, a want of courtesy, a want of unselfishness, are**

all instantaneously symbolized in one flash of Temper.

Hence it is not enough to deal with the temper. We must go to the source, and change the inmost



nature, and the angry humors will die away of themselves. Souls are made sweet not by taking the acid fluids out, but by putting something in--a great Love, a new Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. **Christ, the Spirit of Christ, interpenetrating ours, sweetens, purifies, transforms all.** This only can eradicate what is wrong, work a chemical change, **renovate** and **regenerate**, and **rehabilitate** the inner man. Will-power does not change men. Time does not change men. Christ does. Therefore "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Some of us have not much time to lose. Remember, once more, that this is a matter of life or death. I cannot help speaking urgently, for myself, for yourselves. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the

depth of the sea." That is to say, it is the deliberate verdict of the Lord Jesus that it is better not to live than not to love. *It is better not to live than not to love.*

Guilelessness and *Sincerity* may be dismissed almost with a word. *Guilelessness* is the grace for suspicious people. And the possession of it is the great secret of personal influence. You will find, if you think for a moment, that **the people who influence you are people who believe in you.** In an atmosphere of suspicion men shrivel up; but in that atmosphere they expand, and find encouragement and educative fellowship. It is a wonderful thing that here and there in this hard, uncharitable world there should still be left a few rare souls who think no evil. This is the great unworldliness. **Love "thinketh no evil," imputes no motive, sees the bright side, puts the best construction on every action. What a delightful state of mind to live in!** What a stimulus and benediction even to meet with it for a day!

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To be trusted is to be saved. And if we try to influence or elevate others, we shall soon see that success is in proportion to their belief of our belief in them. For the respect of another is the first restoration of the self-respect a man has lost; our ideal of what he is becomes to him the hope and pattern of what he may become.

"Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." I have called this *Sincerity* from the words rendered in the Authorized Version by "rejoiceth in the truth." And, certainly, were this the real translation, nothing could be more just. For he who loves will love Truth not less than men. He will rejoice in the Truth--rejoice not in what he has been taught to believe; not in this Church's doctrine or in that; not in this ism or in that ism; but "in *the Truth*." He will accept only what is real; he will strive to get at facts; he will search for Truth with a humble and unbiased mind, and cherish whatever he finds at any sacrifice. But the more literal translation of the Revised Version calls for just such a sacrifice for truth's sake here. For what Paul really meant is, as we there read, "Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth," a quality which probably no one English word--and certainly not *Sincerity*--adequately defines. It includes, perhaps more strictly, the self-restraint which refuses to make capital out of others' faults; **the charity which delights not in exposing the weakness of others**, but "covereth all things"; the sincerity of purpose which endeavors to see things as they are, and rejoices to find them better than suspicion feared or calumny denounced. (calumny: [Webster's] -- a false and malicious statement, slander.)

So much for the analysis of Love. Now the business of our lives is to have these things fitted into our characters. That is the supreme work to which we need to address ourselves in this world, to learn Love. **Is life not full of opportunities for learning Love? Every man and woman every day has a thousand of them.** The world is not a play-ground; it is a schoolroom. Life is not a holiday, but an



education. And the one eternal lesson for us all is *how better we can love*. What makes a man a good cricketer? **Practice**. What makes a man a good artist, a good sculptor, a good musician? **Practice**. What makes a man a good linguist, a good stenographer? **Practice**. What makes a man a good man? **Practice**. Nothing else. There is nothing capricious about religion. We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws, from those in which we get the body and the mind. If a man does not exercise his arm he develops no biceps muscle; and if a man does not exercise his soul, he acquires no muscle in his soul, no strength of character,

no vigor of moral fiber, nor beauty of spiritual growth. Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion. **It is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the whole round Christian character--the Christlike nature in its fullest development. And the constituents of this great character are only to be built up by ceaseless practice.**

What was Christ doing in the carpenter's shop? **Practicing**. Though perfect, **we read that He learned obedience, He increased in wisdom and in favor with God and man**. Do not quarrel therefore with your lot in life. Do not complain of its never-ceasing cares, its petty environment, the vexations you have to stand, the small and sordid souls you have to live and work with. Above all, do not resent temptation; do not be perplexed because it seems to thicken round you more and more, and ceases neither for effort nor for agony nor prayer. That is the practice which God appoints you; and it is having its work in making you patient, and humble, and generous, and unselfish, and kind, and courteous. Do not grudge the hand that is molding the still too shapeless image within you. It is growing more beautiful though you see it not, and every touch of temptation may add to its perfection. **Therefore keep in the midst of life. Do not isolate yourself**. Be among men, and among things, and among troubles, and difficulties, and obstacles. You remember Goethe's words: *Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille, Doch ein Character in dem Strom der Welt*. "Talent develops itself in solitude; character in the stream of life." Talent develops itself in solitude--the talent of prayer, of faith, of meditation, of seeing the unseen; Character grows in the stream of the world's life. That chiefly is where men are to learn love.



How? Now, how? To make it easier, I have named a few of the elements of love. But these are only elements. Love itself can never be defined. Light is a something more than the sum of its ingredients--a glowing, dazzling, tremulous ether. And love is something more than all its elements-- a palpitating, quivering, sensitive, living thing. By synthesis of all the colors, men can make whiteness, they cannot make light. By synthesis of all the virtues, men can make virtue, they cannot make love. How then are we to have this transcendent living whole conveyed into our souls? We brace our wills to secure it. We try to copy those who have it. We lay down rules about it. We watch. We pray. But these things alone will not bring Love into our nature. Love is an *effect*. And only as we fulfill the right condition can we have the effect produced. Shall I tell you what the *cause* is?

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If you turn to the Revised Version of the First Epistle of John you will find these words: "**We love, because He first loved us.**" "We love," not "We love *Him*." That is the way the old Version has it, and it is quite wrong. "*We love*--because He first loved us." Look at that word "because." It is the cause

of which I have spoken. "Because He first loved us," the effect follows that **we love, we love Him, we love all men**. We cannot help it. Because He loved us, we love, we love everybody. Our heart is slowly changed. **Contemplate the love of Christ, and you will love**. Stand before that mirror, reflect Christ's character, and you will be changed into the same image from tenderness to tenderness. There is no other way. **You cannot love to order. You can only look at the lovely object, and fall in love with it, and grow into likeness to it**. And so look at this Perfect Character, this Perfect Life. Look at the great

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Sacrifice as He laid down Himself, all through life, and upon the Cross of Calvary; and you must love Him. And loving Him, you must become like Him. **Love begets love**. It is a process of induction. Put a piece of iron in the presence of a magnetized body, and that piece of iron for a time becomes magnetized. It is charged with an attractive force in the mere presence of the original force, and as long as you leave the two side by side, they are both magnets alike. **Remain side by side with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and you too will become a center of power, a permanently attractive force; and like Him you will draw all men unto you, like Him you will be drawn unto all men. That is the inevitable effect of Love**. Any man who fulfills that cause must have that effect produced in him. Try to give up the idea that religion comes to us by chance, or by mystery, or by caprice. It comes to us by natural law, or by supernatural law, for all law is Divine. Edward Irving went to see a dying boy once, and when he entered the room he just put his hand on the sufferer's head, and said, "My boy, God loves you," and went away. And the boy started from his bed, and called out to the people in the house, "God loves me! God loves me!" It changed that boy. The sense that God loved him overpowered him, melted him down, and began the creating of a new heart in him. And that is how the love of God melts down the unlovely heart in man, and begets in him the new creature, who is patient and humble and gentle and unselfish. And there is no other way to get it. There is no mystery about it. We love others, we love everybody, we love our enemies, **because He first loved us**.

- Dr. Henry Drummond