

In one of the PEANUTS cartoons, a little girl calls Charlie Brown on the telephone. "*Marcie and I are about to leave for camp, Chuck,*" she says. "*We're going to be swimming instructors.*"

Marcie takes the phone and adds: "*We just called to say goodbye, Charles. We are going to miss you. We love you.*" The forever loser Charlie Brown stands by the phone with a grin on his face. One little friend asks, "*Who was that?*"

He answers, "I think it was a right number."

In today's reading, Jesus was speaking to the church when he said: "***This I command you, to love one another.***"

Love was the mark of Christianity in the first two centuries. Tertullian summed it up like this, "***Look...how they love one another.***"

Would the casual observer say the same thing about our church today? "***Look how they love one another.***" Would it be possible for a hungry soul to come into our church today and leave feeling as if someone cares? **How well do we measure up to this commandment from Christ?**

LOVE HAS AWESOME POWER. Dr. Karl Menninger, the well-known psychiatrist, claimed that the most tragic word in society today is "**UNLOVED.**" "Love cures people," he said, "both the ones that give it and the ones that receive it." ***And he's right! Love cures! Love heals!***

LOVE HEALS HURTING BODIES. Scientific research now confirms what many of us suspected all along. ***Love can heal a hurting body.***

Roy Angell once told the story of a particularly affectionate puppy who hung around a sanitarium. A doctor at the sanitarium decided to try an experiment on the pup. She made a small incision on the puppy's leg. Then she bandaged it. Finally, she instructed those at the sanitarium to feed the pup but not to show it any affection. The change in the little dog was dramatic. Whereas it had always been energetic, frisky and friendly, it now seemed quite forlorn. Even more significantly, six weeks later the incision on its leg had not healed.

The doctor then instructed everyone at the sanitarium to lavish love on the tiny creature. Soon the little puppy was frisky and energetic again. And the incision healed quickly. **No one knows the healing streams that lie within the human body which may be activated by the power of love.**

In Sweden a nurse working in a government convalescent home, was assigned to an elderly woman patient. This patient had not spoken a word in three years. The other nurses disliked her and tried to have nothing to do with her. **The new nurse decided to try unlimited love.** The elderly woman rocked all day in a rocking chair. So, one day the nurse pulled up a rocking chair beside the lady and just rocked along with her and loved her. On the third day, the patient opened her eyes and said, "You're so kind." Two weeks later the lady was well enough to leave the home.

It doesn't always work like that, of course, but studies are accumulating. LOVE DOES HEAL!

The poet Elizabeth Barrett was an invalid for many years, unable even to lift her head from her pillow. One day she was visited by a man named Robert Browning. In just one visit he gave her so much joy and happiness that she lifted her head. On his second visit she sat up in bed. **On the third visit they eloped.**

Love heals the body! *No wonder people were healed by coming into contact with Jesus. He was love incarnate and that is what He calls His church to be today. Love made flesh. Love can heal the body.*

LOVE CAN ALSO HEAL THE HEART. Somewhere I read about a pastor who asked his congregation if they knew of anyone who was suffering. A little girl, raised her hand and said...

"My father is, but he won't tell anyone." The girl then hugged her father tightly. The father, already embarrassed, said, "Stop hugging me. You're hugging me to death."

"Oh, no, Daddy," she cried, "I'm hugging you to life." That's what many people need more than anything else. They need someone to hug them to life. We live in a fragmented, alienated society. **People desperately need to know that somebody cares.**

A study was done by a government commission on chronic poverty in Appalachia. Before conducting the study, the members of the commission assumed that poverty was linked to environment or lack of education. These are important factors, of course. But the members of the commission made some discoveries they had not expected.

For example, on occasion they would journey up a creek beyond socialized civilization. There they would run across a house and family that was falling apart. No surprise there. That is what they expected. Yet farther up the creek they would find a home that was well kept and a family that was industrious.

WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE? It could not be isolation or lack of education for the families were nearly identical in such things. Rather the family that was doing well almost always had a relative nearby, or a neighbor-**someone who cared enough to be interested in their NEEDS-THEY CARED.**

Everybody needs to know that somebody cares. YES, LOVE HEALS THE BODY, LOVE HEALS THE HEARTS...AND

LOVE ALSO LIFTS US TO A HIGHER PLANE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. How often the story has been told, *"He did it because of love."*

That was true of Elias Howe. He was a man broken in health and poverty stricken. He wanted to give up. After all, why keep trying when life has knocked you down so many times? Day by day, though, he watched his wife slowly sewing in order to get them a little money for the next meal. **Beyond and above all things, Howe loved his wife, and it hurt him to watch her work so hard.**

Because of his love for her, he forgot his sick body and began thinking how he might help her. He went to work. Six months later he completed the first model of a machine that would revolutionize households throughout the world. **It was the first sewing machine.** Howe's invention made him famous, and it made him rich. It also helped restore him to health. It was his love for his wife, however, that drove him to this high achievement.

George Eastman, the talented inventor and founder of the **Eastman Kodak Company**, often stated that he never set out to become rich. Nor was it specifically his intent to promote photography.

Eastman lost his father while he was still young. He was forced to watch his mother scrape financially to provide the bare essentials for George and his two sisters. Memories of his mother mopping floors and washing clothes for other people haunted George like a bad dream throughout his life. **Consequently, he vowed to make enough money so that his mother would never have to work again.**

Actually, he made millions, and he revolutionized photography but his real goal was a comfortable living for his mother.

THAT IS WHAT "LOVE" DOES FOR US!! IT LIFTS US!! It lifts us to do more than we think we are capable of!

THAT IS WHAT "LOVE" DOES!! It brings us pleasure and comfort and lifts us to a new plane of accomplishment. **A place where we do for others as they have done for us and maybe even more!!**

OF COURSE, LOVE LIFTED CHRIST TO THE CROSS OF CALVARY. *"We love,"* John says in his epistle, *"because he first loved us."* Love doesn't always make us rich and healthy. Sometimes it costs us mightily. It cost

Christ. But he paid the price gladly and thereby set an example for us. *"Love one another," he said, "as I have loved you."*

The love we share in this fellowship is love we first received from Him. And we are still receiving it, for He is with us now, and He is still loving. He is still comforting and reassuring us with His presence.

It reminds me of a story former President Ronald Reagan once told. During World War II, Reagan's job was to review letters of recommendations. Many of these letters resulted in soldiers receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor.

One letter told of a gunner who was trapped in a hole in the bottom of a B-29 bomber, following a crippling attack. The landing gear of the plane was destroyed, and the captain did not know if he could land the plane without the gunner being killed.

As it turned out, that decision never had to be made. As the plane neared England, the captain realized that they would never reach an airstrip anyway. He ordered everyone to bail out. Just as the last man stood ready to jump, the captain then took off his parachute. He knelt down beside the gunner still trapped helplessly in the hole and said, *"Sergeant, looks like you and I are going to land this thing together."*

He did not desert the young soldier even if it meant his own life. **THAT MY FRIENDS IS "LOVE."** *That's the kind of love that lifted Christ to the cross.* That is the LOVE THAT GOD SHOWERS ON BOTH YOU AND ME EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES!!

Wouldn't it be tragic in the light of that kind of love, if you and I could not get along with one another? How trivial our petty antagonisms and animosities are in the shadow of Calvary. *"Love one another."*

What a simple commandment, yet it carries such power.

- Power to heal minds, souls and bodies.
- Power that heals our hearts
- Power to lift us to new planes of accomplishment.

I cherish that kind of love for our fellowship and I believe it can be ours. For the God of love is in our midst. And He will empower us.

And BECAUSE OF THAT "LOVE" people will be able to say, "Look...how those Christians love one another." Amen.