

Dear fellow pilgrims,

Last week we tackled two chapters in Book 3 of *Mere Christianity*, which were full of much wisdom on the theological virtues of Charity (Christian Love) and Hope. Both of these virtues seem widely misunderstood and rarely practiced in our world today, so I would encourage you to spend some time with this material and seek how God would have you apply it in your life. Tomorrow evening, we will engage what Lewis has to say about the virtue of Christian Faith.

Here is an outline of the main points we covered last week:

9. Charity

Charity means "Love, in the Christian sense." But love, in the Christian sense, does not mean an emotion. It is a state not of the feelings but of the will; that state of the will which we have naturally about ourselves, and must learn to have about other people. I pointed out in the chapter on Forgiveness that our love for ourselves does not mean that we like ourselves. It means that we wish our own good. In the same way Christian Love (or Charity) for our neighbours is quite a different thing from liking or affection. We "like" or are "fond of" some people, and not of others. It is important to understand that this natural "liking" is neither a sin nor a virtue, any more than your likes and dislikes in food are a sin or a virtue. But though natural likings should normally be encouraged, it would be quite wrong to think that the way to become charitable is to sit trying to manufacture affectionate feelings.

Action, not feelings The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less... The more cruel you are, the more you will hate; and the more you hate, the more cruel you will become—and so on in a vicious circle for ever.

Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance. The smallest good act today is the capture of a strategic point from which, a few months later, you may be able to go on to victories you never dreamed of. An apparently trivial indulgence in lust or anger today is the loss of a ridge or railway line or bridgehead from which the enemy may launch an attack otherwise impossible.

Ask yourself, "If I were sure that I loved God, what would I do?" When you have found the answer, go and do it. On the whole, God's love for us is a much safer subject to think about than our love for Him. Nobody can always have devout feelings: and even if we could, feelings are not what God principally cares about. Christian Love, either towards God or towards man, is an affair of the will. But the great thing to remember is that, though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and, therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.

IMPLICATIONS

1. **Choose to love**—the other side of the coin from embracing the Pride and Narcissism rampant in our culture.
2. **Reject feelings as the only basis for Reality and loving relationships.**
3. **Embrace a full and Biblical understanding of the Golden Rule:** *"Here is a simple, rule-of-thumb guide for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for them. Add up God's Law and Prophets and this is what you get."* Matthew 7:12 MSG
4. **Focus daily on Jesus's words about the mark of the Christian and the obverse:** *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* John 13:35 ESV

10. Hope

Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that *the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next*. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth, precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.

Aim at Heaven and you will get earth "thrown in": aim at earth and you will get neither. We shall never save civilisation as long as civilisation is our main object. We must learn to want something else even more. Most of us find it very difficult to want "Heaven" at all... [However,] most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise.

Longings The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us.

Three responses Now there are two wrong ways of dealing with this fact, and one right one.

--**The Fool's Way** He puts the blame on the things themselves. He goes on all his life thinking that if only he tried another woman, or went for a more expensive holiday, or whatever it is, then, this time, he really would catch the mysterious something we are all after. Most of the bored, discontented, rich people in the world are of this type. They spend their whole lives trotting from woman to woman (through the divorce courts), from continent to continent, from hobby to hobby, always thinking that the latest is "the Real Thing" at last, and always disappointed.

--**The Way of the Disillusioned "Sensible Man"** He soon decides that the whole thing was moonshine. But supposing infinite happiness really is there, waiting for us? Supposing one really can reach the rainbow's end? In that case it would be a pity to find out too late (a moment after death) that by our supposed "common sense" we had stifled in ourselves the faculty of enjoying it.

--**The Christian Way** The Christian says, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud.

Types and shadows Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same

IMPLICATIONS

1. **Do not let the Despair that is rampant in our culture take root in your life.** *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed* 2 Cor. 4:8-9 *always being prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you* 1 Peter 3:15
2. **FLEE from complaining and “awful-izing.”** *Do everything without complaining and arguing* Philippians 2:14
3. **Cultivate an eternal perspective and cultivate and express gratitude.** *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.* Hebrews 11:13-14

Here is the link for class tomorrow, Wednesday, May 5, at 7:15 p.m. EDT--

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99307536525>

Please feel free to share the class link with friends--the more, the merrier!

I look forward to "seeing" you tomorrow in class on Zoom!

Further up and further in,
Brian+

Music link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2oYTyBSxk>

Video link from last week's class:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uzon4MMXmiQ>

Podcast link:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/mere-christianity-episode-23-book-3-chapters-9-10-hope/id1537579476?i=1000519327168>

Church website link:

<https://www.stphilipchurchsc.org/mere-christianity-/episode/2021-04-28/mere-christianity-episode-23-book-3-chapters-9-and-10-hope-and-charity>