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Is Your Heart Big Enough?

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So much of what it means to live for Jesus is summed up in the word love. Among other things, love is an essential ingredient in the recipe for unity among believers. The body of Christ builds itself up “in love” (Ephesians 4:16). Love is “the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14). The love which binds us together is more than mere feeling or sentiment. It is a powerful force which inspires us to behave in specific ways (cp. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8). Because love “does not rejoice in iniquity”, one thing it compels us to do is to correct the errors of those whom we love. Galatians 6:1-2 commands, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

In Galatians we are shown that “the law of Christ” is a law rooted in love. Paul asserts that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything “but faith working through love” (5:6). “Through love” we “serve one another” (5:13). “All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (5:14). And, “the fruit of the Spirit is love...” (5:22). The point is that the law of Christ is a law of love and we fulfill it by bearing one another’s burdens, including helping one another overcome sin.

Paul exemplified this spirit of love in his dealings with the Corinthians. In his first letter to them, he severely rebuked the Corinthians for their errors. In his second letter, he explained that “out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you” (2 Corinthians 2:4). He spoke so openly to them because his heart was “enlarged” (2 Corinthians 6:11). His heart was swelling with love for the Corinthians, and he could not bear to see them lose their souls.

More than anything else, we need hearts enlarged with such love — love that refuses to sit idly by and watch as brothers and sisters in Christ are overcome with sin. “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). It should be noted that this passage does not say that love covers sins by ignoring them. Love “covers a multitude of sins” by encouraging the sinner to repent, and by readily forgiving him when he does. “Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). Is your heart big enough to restore your fallen brother or sister?