

Something Better Than the Best

#0864

Study by W.D. Frazee

Let us turn to 1 Corinthians the 12 chapter and the 31st verse, where our text begins. When Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, he didn't divide it into chapters and verses. That was done many years later in order to make it convenient for us to find passages. As Paul was writing along, there was no break in his mind between the thirty-first verse of the twelfth chapter, and the first verse of the thirteenth. So we will read these verses together. The subject that I want to study with you is something better than the best.

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" 1 Corinthians 12:31.

There is something better than the best. Paul says, Covet, that is earnestly desire, the best thing, the best gift, but there is something better still than that? What could that be? Well then he begins to tell us.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing" 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

What is this wonderful thing which is something better than the best? Love. We will never get beyond that, never get outside of it in all the eternity that God is preparing for us. This is it. We can have it now, dear friends. Something better than the best-- love.

Now I would like to ask a very short question. What is love? I have found a little definition in the Bible.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law" Romans 13:10.

That is what love is. Now there is in the world today a strange perversion, deception, which to word it bluntly runs like this. If you love, you don't need to keep the law, that love is a substitute for keeping the law. That when Jesus gave the new commandment, love one another as I have loved you, that superseded and did away with, and took the place of the law. All we have to do now is love. I say, what a strange deception that is, because the truth of the matter is, friends, love is the fulfilling of law.

I wonder if in our minds love and law are linked as closely and as firmly as they were in Paul's mind as he wrote these scriptures. How is it in your mind? Where is love and where is law? Most of the world today is made up of two classes of people, those who think of law as a necessary evil, and those who think of it as an unnecessary evil.

Law and love are closely linked. I want to study there linking with you this morning as we study this wonderful subject, something better than the best.

Which comes first, love or law? Which is the antecedent, the spring? Love. I found a beautiful text in Deuteronomy that I want to share with you. It brings this out. Moses is speaking in retrospect to the experience of the children of Israel in their long Exodus from Egypt to Canaan. He is dwelling especially upon that grand scene when God came down from heaven and spoke His law to His people.

"The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people" Deuteronomy 33:2-3.

What does "yea" mean? Yes. You notice the blending, the linking of law and love.

"From his right hand *went* a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people" Deuteronomy 33:3.

Do you associate the giving of law with the out flowing of love? It is so in God's mind. It is always so. You know another definition of love that I like is that love is an intense desire to please. I can understand a little bit of that. I notice that if I love somebody, I want to please them. I also notice that the more I love them, the more I want to please them. I notice that people who love me want to please me. I can understand that.

If God loves me better than anybody else, who wants to please me more than anybody else? God does. And if God wants to please me, and that desire in His heart is an infinite desire, then there is no way to make it any greater. He wants to please me

a million times more than I want to please myself. He knows a great deal more about how to please me than I know how to please myself.

I am sorry that I haven't always believed that. I am sure that every sin I ever committed was due to a failure to believe that. God's law flows from His heart of love. He is thinking how to please me. Am I hard to please? Yes. But God knows how to please me. And if I will only let Him, He will tell me what to do so I will be pleased. That is what His law is. It is God telling me how to be happy, what will be for my good.

Let's turn and read that in Deuteronomy.

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

What are the commandments for? For our good. Every one of them, friends. Never has God commanded anything without, shall I say, thinking it through to the point that of all the things He could have said, this that He did say was the thing that would make us happier than anything else.

It is summed up so beautifully in this book *Child Guidance*, page 259.

"The law of God ... flows from a heart of infinite love"
Child Guidance, page 259.

Can you picture a great spring issuing from a mountainside? Millions of gallons of crystal clear water flowing forth in a mighty river. There are such streams. Such is a picture of the heart of God. From that heart of love is flowing a stream of love, and what is it? It is His law, my friends. His law.

Who is it then that is responsible for causing human hearts to think of law as something undesirable, something that restricts our freedom, that denies us happiness? Who is that? Satan. And what kind of person is he? A liar. Does he have a hidden motive in trying to get us to feel that way? Ah yes, it is so that we will distrust God as he distrusted God so that we will rebel against God as he rebelled against God. So that we will advocate doing away with law as he advocated doing away with law.

Now he has various methods of attack. He comes out boldly in some religious systems and advocates deliberately that the law of God is done away. He has, my friends, a far more subtle approach in your home and mine. He suggests that we can get along well without rules, without direct commands. He suggests that it would be a lot nicer and easier on both parents and children to merely guide, to suggest, to cook the carrots in such an attractive way that the children will eat them without even knowing what they are eating. And so on and on.

It has other manifestations. In educational work today everything must be a game, arithmetic must be a game, English must be a game. Why? Because duty might be unattractive. Requirements might not be palatable. Everything must be made to be fun. Everything must have sugar in it. The more sugar the better even if it makes holes in the teeth later on.

I say to you, my friends, all those things are fruits from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Those ideas are subtle mixtures of truth and error designed to divert us from the tree of life. God is seeking to draw us to an appreciation of His character which is love, and the revelation of that character which is law. He wants to bring us to the place where, like David, we can say, Oh how I love thy law. Psalm 119:97. He wants to bring us where we can join in that beautiful response of Psalm 40:8: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart." Psalms 40:8.

It is going to take this conception of law in this attitude toward law to carry us through this crisis of the future, dear friends. All the world is going to be arrayed against the law of God. We are going to be punished severely by men if we will keep that law. We are going to be offered rewards and bribes of various kinds if we will forsake it. And it is going to take, deep in our hearts, an understanding of what law is, what God is, to hold us through.

I thank God this morning that His Word reveals and the Spirit of Prophecy confirms the fact that God's law flows from a heart of infinite love. Every expression of command is because of His love.

Now friends, He wants us to be that way. He wants every teacher, every parent, every supervisor to have that same attitude. Notice page 261 of *Child Guidance*.

"The rules which should regulate the lives of parents and children flow from a heart of infinite love, and God's rich blessings will rest upon those parents who administer His law in their homes, and upon the children who obey this law"
Child Guidance, page 261.

Note on page 248 this very interesting statement.

"In all your commands aim to secure the highest good of your children" *Ibid*, page 248.

That is the way God is with His children. Whenever God says anything among a thousand things that He might tell us to do, He picks out the one thing that will be for our highest good. Is that right? Yes. That is what we are to do, parents, teachers, supervisors, directors in any line.

Oh, but some practical-minded person says, "But how will we ever get the work done?" Well, friends, if we have to violate this rule to get the work done, we had better leave the work undone. The most important thing is not to get the work done, it is to get us done, and our children done, and our students done for the kingdom of God. Is that right?

I will tell you, don't worry, if we will follow this plan, God will get the work done. In fact, unless we follow this plan, it will never get done. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If we are to fill the measure full we must understand that every command is to flow from a heart of love.

Now let's think about that for a little bit. Here is father and mother. They are talking together. They are having a little converse to lay some plans. What are they thinking about? Well if they have love in their hearts, they are thinking about the good of who? Their children. And all of us as parents know that to the extent we have love that is true, isn't it? And every day all day long every command that we issue is to be for the highest good of the person to whom we issue. That is the way to run an office. That is the way to run a department. That is the way to run a farm. That is the way to run a laundry. That is the way to run a home. Never issue a command unless you know that that command is for the highest good of the person to whom you issue it.

You know I think if we would put everything through that sieve, there are a number of things that would never get through. There are some commands that would never be issued. I believe also, friends, that if we would put everything through that sieve, once we had given the command we would be prepared to stand there without worry, without fighting, without fear.

That is the reason that God is unchangeable. God knows that the thing that He has told us is for our highest good so He is not going to change. "I know him," God said of Abraham, "that he will command his household and his children after him," that they may keep the way of the Lord. Genesis 18:19. Abraham knew the way of the Lord. He taught that to his children. His word was law. The law of love. But not love without law, for love finds expression in law, in direct commands.

For example, here is a little child. He is not old enough to know anything about proteins, unsaturated fatty acids, and all the rest. He doesn't understand that. Does a loving parent say to a child like that, "Darling, here are quite a number of foods. What would you like this morning?"

Perhaps we are going on a visit. We are over at Aunt Alice's or Uncle Harry's. They will have all manner of things there. The little one sees Uncle Harry take this, or Aunt Mary take that. "Oh I want some of that." Why does he want it? Well he is curious. He is interested. He sees somebody else doing it. What a wonderful thing it is

if in the heart of that parent is the understanding of two things, first that God requires that parent to issue a command, not a question, a command, and second, that that command is to reflect what the parent understands is the highest good of that child. That is it.

The parent is to know what if for the highest good of that child. You say, "Is the child never to understand?" Yes. But as we studied last night, there is something that comes before understanding. What is it? Obedience. And there is something that comes before obedience, and that is law because obedience is the response to law. Isn't it? Yes. So that law is to flow from a heart of infinite love.

Do we go out into the woods with our children or to the zoo and let them see the various animals and decide for themselves whether or not they will have a pet rattlesnake? Ah, my friends, there are creeping into our homes today dozens and scores of things which are far more dangerous and more deadly than rattlesnakes. God wants law in the home.

Do you know what the first law of heaven is? Order.

"Order is heaven's first law, and the Lord desires His people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts"

Do you know what order is? Order is a place for everything and everything in its place. And do you know what the place of the father is in the home? Do you know what the place of the mother is in the home? Do you know what the place of the children is in the home? I won't study that this morning, but you will find it in this wonderful book *Child Guidance*, as well as *Adventist Home*.

It isn't love that resigns or abdicates our place. Oh no. Lucifer thought that he was showing a wonderful spirit when he left his place, the highest place of any created being, and went down among the angels and showed how wonderful he was to be a pal of theirs. And some parents think that they are doing something wonderful to be pals with their children, kind of help them along, but let them decide everything. That is the spirit of Lucifer. Order is heaven's first law, and order means a place for everything and everything in its place.

Several years ago there was a leading man from England that came over and spent some time in this country. When he went back to England, people asked him what impressed him most in the United States. He said how obedient the parents were to their children.

Friends, it is worse than something to laugh about or smile about, it is something to weep over. We are in the days foretold by prophecy, the last days, when children are disobedient to their parents. But one of the biggest reasons that children are disobedient is that the parents have abdicated. False theories arising from so-called psychology are being taught that undermine the fundamental principles of the government of God.

Now what is it that is something better than the best? Love. And what does the love of God cause Him to do? Give us law. And all His laws flow from a heart of infinite love. That simple means that as we read there in Deuteronomy, they are for our good. Our best good. Always. Every parent, every administrator, every teacher, every director, is to catch that view and share that vision and in the commands that he issues, he is to be thinking of the best good of those under him. That idea is to flow out in every word of command that he issues. Is that right? Yes.

I come then to the next point. If love is to be the motive that prompts the giving of the law, should not love also mold the expression of that law? Should not love control our manner as we tell people what to do? Do I walk up to my child with a birthday present, and say, "Here now, you have got to eat this!" You see, dear friends, if we know that we are doing it for the good of people, we can afford to do it in an attractive, acceptable manner. Can't we?

I fear that some of our harsh scolding manner springs from a hidden doubt in our hearts as to whether we are really issuing the thing that is best for the good of those that we direct. If our concept of law and commands is something like this, if the children in his inner heart is thinking, "Why do I have to do this?", if our answer is, "Well, because you are little and I am big. I had to do it when I was little, and someday you will be big and won't have to do it, but you have got to do it now because I am telling you so." A bit of that may seep out in our manner. But if we know the thing that we are commanding is from a heart of love for the best good of those we direct, we can afford to do it, we will do it, we must do it in a loving way.

In other words, friends, such a beautiful picture ought to have a good frame. Such a lovely present ought to be nicely wrapped up. It would be a shame, dear friends, to take a hundred dollar present and wrap it up in an old newspaper and throw it to somebody. If the command you are issuing to your child, to your student, to your helper, is a command that is for their best good, why not present it in an attractive way? Why not speak in a loving tone? Why not speak in a tone that expects a loving response? Why not?

You remember what Paul says in Ephesians 4:31-32.

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted" Ephesians 4:31-32.

That is the way to speak. That is the way to issue commands.

"Fathers and mothers, in the home you are to represent God's disposition" *Child Guidance*, page 259.

What? God's disposition. How are the children to get acquainted with God's disposition? Your disposition. Can you afford to be moody then? God isn't. Thank the Lord.

"Fathers and mothers, in the home you are to represent God's disposition. You are to require obedience, not with a storm of words, but in a kind, loving manner" *Ibid.*, page 259

Isn't it too bad that we so often associate the kind loving manner with indulgence? And the strict, stern, scolding, harsh manner with law? Isn't that too bad? I wonder who engineered that? The Devil. What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. God has joined together law and love, my friends. The indulgent parent has no right to the loving manner. And the firm, strict, parent should have no use for the harsh, scolding manner.

"Fathers and mothers, in the home you are to represent

God's disposition. You are to require obedience, not with a storm of words, but in a kind, loving manner. You are to be so full of compassion that your children will be drawn to you"
Ibid., page 256

Oh, I think that is beautiful, friends. Don't you? What a shame that any child has ever heard from parental lips the question, "How many times am I going to have to tell you to do so?" Poor child doesn't know how many times. Oh love in the manner is so important.

“Christ is ready to teach the father and the mother to be true educators. Those who learn in His school . . . will never speak in a harsh, unsympathetic tone. ... They [parents] are not authorized to fret and scold and ridicule” *Ibid.*, page 282.

Page 283 speaks of an injudicious mother who alternately coaxed and scolded. Coaxing isn't necessary in God's true program of law and love.

“The mother should not allow her child to gain an advantage over her in a single instance. And, in order to maintain this authority, it is not necessary to resort to harsh measures; a firm, steady hand and a kindness which convinces the child of your love will accomplish the purpose” *Ibid.*, page 283.

Isn't that wonderful, friends? So love in the heart prompts the command, and love in the voice carries the command.

Now one more thing. As love prompts the command, so love prompts the response. God's love leads Him to give us His law. Our love for Him leads us to obey His law. Is that right? Yes.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”
1 John 5:3.

What does grievous mean? Heavy. Burdensome. Make us feel bad. God's law is an easy yoke, and if we love Him, we will love His law, and love to obey. Happy the child who early learns to express his love for father and mother by doing just what they say--willingly, promptly and cheerfully. Happy the parents who have learned to respond to God's law, to respect and obey their Heavenly Father, that in turn their children may respect and obey them.

Well, dear friends, this is that which is something better than the best--love. And in closing may I give you these great facts? Love was not invented in order to secure obedience to law. But law was conceived in order that love might find expression first in issuing commands for our good, and second, in obedience, showing our desire to please. God shows His desire to please us by telling us what to do. We show our desire to please Him by doing what He says.

In the home, the parents show their love for their children by telling them the best thing to do. And the child shows his love for his parents by doing the thing that he is told. This is love.

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way” 1 Corinthians 12:31.

The way of love.

Copyright 2019. All rights reserved.

W.D. Frazee Sermons
PO Box 129, Wildwood, GA 30757
1-800-WDF-1840 / 706-820-9755
www.WDFsermons.org
support@WDFsermons.org