

a more excellent way

"but earnestly desire the best gifts. and yet i show you a more excellent way." 1 cor 12:31

from there the apostle paul begins to expound the beautiful love chapter. "though i speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, i have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." 1 cor 13:1

are you a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal? in other words, what you do for God, is it really a "works" or solely the love of God and mankind, seeking God's glory? paul tells us that it doesn't matter how gifted we are or how hard we labor for the kingdom, it might well be all in vain.

Jesus said, "many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" matt 7:22 and His response will be. "i never knew you." you see, they were not only trusting in their works, they were also doing them with the wrong motive.

i learned that lesson very well the night my mother died. i know i have told this story before, but i believe the lesson it teaches justifies repeating it.

i had been through several years of struggle and illness with my mother. not to try to justify any motives, but one's flesh becomes tired and a little resentful when burdened for a time. mine was in that state. although i was dutifully doing whatever might

be required of her care, my heart was not where it should be.

my mother had just come home from the hospital, yet again. though i did not know it then, it was for the last time. i was sleeping on the floor in her room so i would be nearby to hear her requests and assist her as needed. she had already called out to me multiple times for assistance and now once again, i heard her voice awaken my slumber. as i got up to help again, there was a tinge of resentment at having all this be my burden.

i am not one prone to visions or hearing God speak, at least not audibly, but even though i felt no holy presence, a sudden thought entered my mind which i knew was from God. it pierced my heart so deep i can almost hear it still. "if you don't do it in love, it doesn't mean anything."

you see, God isn't impressed by the things we do but the love we do them with. i had heretofore done everything a dutifully daughter should, but God was not impressed. He wanted more from me. He wanted me to know the love Christ felt on the cross when He uttered, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." luke 23:34

likewise, i did not know what i was doing when i did it only dutifully and not with love. i doubt whether we will be questioned at the pearly gates by saint peter when we arrive, but if we were, i have heard it said there would be only one question asked: "did you learn to love?" not just those who love us in return, but

those in which love brings no return.

truly, "love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." 1 cor 13:4-7 love is not love till you give it away.

i passed my mother from my arms into God's that night, peacefully and lovingly. because God had spoken to my heart there would be no regrets or guilt for the enemy of all lies to beat me down with. God opened my ears to His whisper in my hour of need. He is so good.

i learned my lesson that night, but truly it is a lesson that must be learned over and over again. it's not a one time lesson. it must be learned and lived daily, given freely and taught others by example. it is the more excellent way. "beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." 1 john 4:7 indeed, God is love.

this IS knowing God. how will you answer the question if ever it is asked? i'm asking you now. "have you learned to love?" i believe we are about to experience love in a way we have never known before. the One who loves us most will summon us unto Himself. "and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." john 14:3 He has been in preparation of that place for two thousand years now. i think it's about

ready for us to come home.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." john 17:24
there's that amazing love again!

Jesus further said, "by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." john 13:35 i look around today and i see so much dissension among His body. it makes one wonder why the enemy would even need to fire a shot. there is so much "friendly fire." certainly there are some doctrines that must be adhered to and really be called christian, but all the rest are just squabbles for the Holy Spirit to sort out, not us. we worry so about the speck in another's eye and ignore the plank in our own. "let each be fully convinced in his own mind." rom 14:5

if we were ever to be used by the Spirit for correction, like an archeologist digging for unknowns, we must gently dust away the dirt shrouding the treasure hidden below - the one for whom Christ died. love as Christ loves us!