



Bible Student's NotebookTM Weekly

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XX
Issue 48I

"Tough Love"?

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

In recent decades Christianity has made much of so-called "tough love." Bill Milliken first coined the phrase in his 1968 book by that title. His book described his approach in recovering delinquent young people who were high school dropouts and/or substance abusers. This "tough love" was a "harsh"¹ tactic at rescuing youth from years of parental neglect.



toughness is not found once in the list.

Love ...

- ✓ is patient
- ✓ is kind
- ✓ is not jealous
- ✓ is not bragging
- ✓ is not puffed up
- ✓ is not indecent
- ✓ is not self-seeking
- ✓ is not incensed
- ✓ is not taking account of evil
- ✓ is not rejoicing in injustice
- ✓ is rejoicing together with the truth
- ✓ is forgoing all
- ✓ is believing all
- ✓ is expecting all
- ✓ is enduring all
- ✓ is never lapsing

Closely on the heels of Milliken's work came the books *Toughlove* and *Toughlove Solutions*, written by psychologists Phyllis & David York in 1985. The concept of "tough love" gained acceptance in Evangelical Christianity through the influence of psychologist Dr. James Dobson.

What had been merely a last ditch effort to recover neglected and troubled youth to productive society has now become a new doctrinal standard for mainstream Christendom, promoting a "harsh" psychological method to be incorporated into parenting and even marriage relationships.

(I Corinthians 13:4-8, CV).

THE NATURE OF LOVE

Error, more often than not, has an element of truth. This is what makes the error so appealing: it *seems* like truth. This is also what makes it so hard to distinguish it from truth. Thus pure truth is obscured.

Examples are plentiful; they are everywhere around us. "Tough Love" is one of them. It sounds good on the surface, but underneath it is another social and religious skewing of the truth. Paul takes nearly an entire chapter to laud 16 attributes of love, and

"TOUGH LOVE"

vs.

LOVE DOING TOUGH THINGS

The truth element in the error of "tough love" is that love must unquestionably do "tough" things at times: discipline, correction, admonishment, rebuke, etc. Thus, some actions that are genuinely motivated by

(see *TOUGH*, page 4251)

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1. A word consistently used to define the "tough love" method.



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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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TOUGH (continued from front page)

love may be seemingly “tough,” but it does not make love “tough.” For instance “rebuke” is a tough thing to do, but when it is done without the “patient” and “kind” nature of love, but rather is “puffed up” and “incensed,” it is not scriptural rebuke at all. Here is Paul’s admonition:

... expose, rebuke, entreat, **with all patience** ...
(II Timothy 4:2, CV).

Even the tough things that love does are to be done by the fruit of God’s spirit:

Now the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control ... (Galatians 5:22-23, CV).

Paul tells us that these are the essential spirit and attitude that must accompany love’s tough actions:

If a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one **in the spirit of meekness** (Galatians 6:1).

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be **gentle** unto all men, apt to teach, **patient**, in **meekness** instructing those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth (II Timothy 2:24-25).

Notice in both of these passages that Paul emphasizes “meekness.” Meekness is not to be confused with weakness, but rather “meekness refers to the type of man who does not retaliate and who is free from the grasping temper which leads to disputes and quarrels.”²

Meekness is the translation of the Greek word πραότης (*praotēs*), defined as:

humility (*Strong*)

gentleness, mildness (*Thayer*)

enduring all things with an even temper, tender, free from haughty self-sufficiency, tender in spirit (*Bullinger*)

While love must at times do some things that are “tough,” “toughness” is *never* a part of love’s essence. There is no more scriptural support for Christianity’s promotion of “tough love” than there would be for some kind of “scrawny love.”

THE “TOUGH” THINGS OF LOVE

The fact of the matter is that sometimes the “toughest” thing to do is *not* to be “tough,” but to be gracious, “patient” and “kind” rather than “puffed up” and “incensed” (I Corinthians 13).

When we have *had enough* and seek self-vindication and self-satisfaction, we attempt to justify our rants and *blowing off steam* by claiming that we are merely practicing “tough love.”

THE MEANING OF LOVE

A.E. Knoch defines ἀγάπη (*agapē*), the Greek word for love in I Corinthians 13, as

A complex emotion arousing appreciation or delight in and desire for the pleasure of its object, as well as to please and promote its welfare; to be distinguished from affection, fondness, which is aroused by the qualities of its object, while love may go out to the utterly unworthy, and also from passion [*eros*] (not found in the Scriptures) between the sexes.

Love (*agapē*) is rooted in and comes forth from the one doing the loving without any regard for the qualities or worthiness of the one being loved. Love appreciates and delights in the object of its love. It desires the welfare and pleasure of its object. It is more than mere affection or fondness, which can find its motivation in one being loved.

It is much easier, on the one hand, to “go with the flow” or, on the other hand, “take a stand” on some supposed “righteous” issue. However, love always involves *sacrificial giving*. Sacrifice is not always easy; humanly speaking, it is often a “tough” thing to do.

For thus God loves the world, **so that He gives** ... (John 3:16).

The Son of God, Who loves me, and gave Him- ▶

2. George M. Lamsa, *Gospel Light: Comments on the Teachings of Jesus*, page 26, A.J. Holman, Bible Publishers, 1939.





self up for me ... (Galatians 2:20).

Husbands can use their “tough love” to throw their weight around and tell their wives “just how it is” – however, scriptural love will make itself an *approach present*. It is harder to sacrifice oneself for another – ones’ hobbies, ones’ interests, even ones’ liberties and life – than it is to bullheadedly “draw a line in the sand.”

Though love takes the “hard” course, it remains a patient, kind love – for, *“love is patient, love is kind ...”*

We will not win our wives by being some kind of “strong” *heavy-handed* husband who can lay down the law. We will win them by being strong enough to lay down our lives – and all that they entail. Herein lays our premiere preparation for the coming eons.

“TOUGH LOVE” IS OFTEN TOO LITTLE TOO LATE

Psychology’s “tough love” is inferior to scriptural love. “Tough love” gives one a pass on day-to-day nurturing, while forcing another’s hand during the peaks of their brokenness. “Tough love” is rarely effective as a replacement for steadfast nurturing, as it frequently comes from a place of detached superiority. Usually, those who are broken and hurting don’t really need anyone to point out to them that their lives are a mess. They know that, and when others, who are also broken, come to them in some type of intervention, as if they had all of the answers, they come off, at best, appearing condescending and ar-

rogant rather than compassionate, empathetic and loving.

Love is selfless, while “tough love” is often selfishly motivated. It’s a fancied quick-fix that seeks behavioral results that are expected to be fast, conclusive and final. Most pain, fear, hurt, failure and brokenness are rooted in complicated circumstances and neglect that developed over many years, and may take as many, if not more, years of love to overcome. However, love – divine love – is completely up for the task, for,

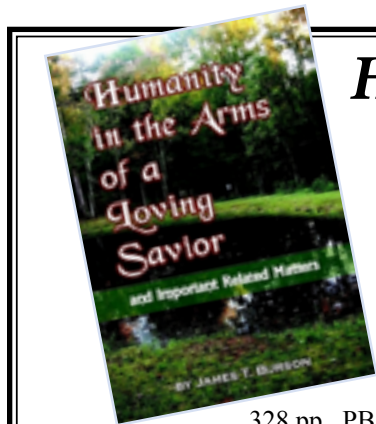
love is patient, love is kind ... love is not puffed up... love is not self-seeking.

The love to which the believer is called is that which motivates us to lay down our own lives for others.

We then who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not Himself; but, as it is written, “The reproaches of them that reproached You fell on Me” (Romans 15:1-3).

“Tough love” is the permission to withhold from others as a means of disapproval or attempt to bring about change; to throw one’s weight around. It is the justification of family, religious and social bullying. Divine love is without condition, regardless of the result.

I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved (II Corinthians 12:15).



Humanity in the Arms of a Loving Savior and Important Related Matters

by — James T. Burson

The chapters of this book are connected in this singular manner: always, there is the attempt to display the grandeur of God’s purpose in creation. Never is it proposed that God had a good idea which went awry, and thereafter He supposedly has been picking up the pieces. Our confidence, as believers, may always be premised on an overriding assurance that God does not behave like a mortal, being hesitant, exasperated, indecisive or hoping for the best outcome. This volume expresses the author’s confidence in a far greater outcome of the entire human epoch than that which is generally proposed to the world. The flow of human history will not end in a groan, but rather a crescendo of praise by all to a true God of love and mercy. God will not only win, but He will radiate His victory over absolutely all that He has made; no other truth can settle the heart like this.

328 pp., PB

See order form.

Yet with the greatest relish shall I spend and be bankrupted for the sake of your souls, even if loving you more exceedingly diminishes your love for me (CV).

Love gives far more than “tough love” ever could. It is freely – “gladly,” “with the greatest relish” – “spent” or “bankrupted” for its object **regardless** of the response.

“Tough love” impatiently cuts off, playing God in the lives of others. “Tough love” is free to leave another in their brokenness, while divine love actually adjoins itself to another in their brokenness. Love is for the long haul – *no matter what*.

LOVE NEVER FAILS

Don't allow anyone to mislead you. Everything in this life is hard, by divine design, and love is no exception. This life is a long, hard journey; but love is up for the task, for “*love never fails*” (I Corinthians 13:8).

Love is never lapsing (Concordant)

Love never ends (Holman)

Love never disappears (Moffatt)

Love never dies (Message)

The Greek word for “fail” is ἐκπίπτω (*ekpiptō*). It is a compound word: *ek* (out), *piptō* (fall); thus to fall out, and means,

be driven out of one's course (Strong).

to fall out (Bullinger)

OUT-FALL (Knoch)

“It was used of an actor who was hissed off the stage.”³ Love will not be hissed off the stage: not by a wife, not by a son or daughter, not by those who are weak, not by those who are broken. “*Love holds its place*” (Vincent).

3. Marvin R. Vincent (1834-1922), *Vincent Word Studies*, I Corinthians 13:8 (1887).

As the negative side of love is unselfish – “*seeketh not her own*” – so her positive side is concern for others – a deep, ardent, all-consuming concern; dauntless, self-sacrificing, invincible. “*Love never faileth*.” Such is the divine essence ...⁴

Although love's course may be lengthy and hard, never be discouraged or weary:

Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

In doing that which is honorable, let us not be fainthearted; for, in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not (Rotherham).

LOVE'S SUPERIORITY

Love is quintessential; it is indispensable. Without love we come up empty – we have “*nothing*” (I Corinthians 13:3), we are “*nothing*” (:2). Paul sums up the chapter by telling us that love is faith's and hope's (or expectation's) superior.

Now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (:13).

The whole concept of “tough love” is a sad invention of modern psychology. It is a pitiful attempt to quick-fix what has been long-neglected. Leave the ill-fated teaching of “tough love” to its evangelist Dr. James Dobson, and the Christianity that is bewitched by him and his teachings. ■

4. D. Buchanan, *Love's Goal, Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 15 (1924).

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Divine Mercy to All

Romans 11:32

by — Dean Hough

The great culmination of Paul's argument, starting with Romans 9, concerning God's ways with Israel and the nations, is given in Romans 11:32. Here we learn that,

God has shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all (ASV).

It is not difficult to understand these words, but it is very difficult to accept them. In the *New International Commentary* series on Romans, John Murray faces the statement squarely and boldly:

It is so ordered in the judgment of God that all are effectively enclosed in the fold of the disobedient and so hemmed in to disobedience that there is no possibility of escape from the servitude except as the mercy of God gives release. There is no possibility of toning down the severity of the action here stated.

It is, however, the severity that exhibits the glory of the main thought of this verse. It is *"that he might have mercy upon all."* The more we reflect upon the implications of the first clause the more enhanced becomes our apprehension of the marvel of the second. And it is not mere correlation of disobedience and mercy that we have now; it is that the shutting up to disobedience without any amelioration of the severity involved, is directed to the end of showing mercy (p.102).

But who are these "all"? Henry Alford points out that "the all" are identical in both clauses and "signify all men without limitation" (The Greek Testament, volume 2, p. 437). This fully accords with Paul's use of the word "all" in reference to Jews and Greeks in Romans 3:9-20 and humanity in general in 3:23. C.E.B. Cranfield observes, apparently with some reluctance,

... If Paul had been asked whether there were any exceptions to the statement of the first part of the verse, it is highly unlikely that he would have said that there were (cf. 3:9f, :19f). And, if the first ["the all"] does include every individual ... there is possibly a certain difficulty in maintaining that this interpretation is ruled out for the second ["the all"] (*International Commentary on Romans*, p. 588).

Nevertheless, Murray does rule this out, claiming that the word "all" in the phrase "mercy upon all" does not mean all without exception, but rather, "all without distinction, who are partakers of this mercy" (p. 103). And Alford leaves his readers



with the impression that God will ultimately not be able to be merciful to the "all men without limitation" who are in view here. His reason is that "this mercy is not accepted" by everyone, even though "this contingency is here not in view" (p.437).

Murray severely distorts the passage by limiting the *all*, and thus he undermines all the praise of God's wisdom and power that is truly there and that he has spoken of so boldly as well. Alford brings in a concept that he admits is not in view and makes his own correct recognition of the scope of "the all" meaningless. What could Paul's point be in speaking of God's mercy to *all* here if he thought human actions would ultimately thwart such a universal blessing? How do :33-36 harmonize with these comments on :32?

Murray is right in pointing to Paul's emphasis on the divine activity. Human disobedience and unbelief cannot keep God from being merciful, for mercy can be given only to stubborn sinners, and this very passage makes it clear that God's operation of shutting humanity to disobedience itself leads to the manifestation of divine mercy to humanity. Alford is right that, in light of the whole context of Romans and the meaning of the word "all" in the first clause of Romans 11:32, the "all" of the second clause must be *all without limitation*.

God will be merciful to everyone. ■



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Christianity's Decline into Legalism

Messianic Judaism – Replacement Theology

by — Brian R. Kelson

Many evangelical Christians are surprised at the growth of the “Messianic Judaism” congregations both here in the United States of America and worldwide. However, a moment of quiet reflection on the history of Christian theology would see such developments as a natural progression.



growing denominations, and in the light of the transference concepts promoted over two millennia, the fertile theological ground for them to flourish has long been available. Indeed, we could applaud the Messianics as being hyper-evangelicals, taking replacement theology to its logical conclusion.

Records suggest that as early as A.D. 160 Justin Martyr saw the “church” as “the true spiritual Israel” and allegory; spiritualization and replacement theology have underpinned Christianity's understanding of itself ever since.

No doubt we are seeing a return to the bondage of works and the complete Judaizing of Christianity as this slide into legalism deepens.

Replacement theology, whether in its wider or restricted view, proclaims that the “church” has either replaced Israel, or is the means whereby God is fulfilling all of His divine purposes outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. Replacement theology transfers all and anything of Israel and eisegetically¹ reads “the church” into most, if not all, passages of Scripture relating to that nation.

How is it that the gangrene of replacement theology infected the Christian community so swiftly, and is now pandemic and ultimately manifested in the Messianic movements? The answer is a simple one: our predecessors ignored Paul and failed to follow the New Testament events according to the Old Testament pattern. We, following in their footsteps, have likewise ignored Paul and the Old Testament patterns dispensationally.

Most of the “faithful” consider themselves “New Covenant believers,” and many “churches” have priests, temples, mercy seats, altars, water baptisms, tithing and worship which is centered around the Passover/Communion Table and the promises made to Israel's fathers.

Instead of seeing the Old Testament patterns as typifying the restoration of Israel's kingdom and the reign of Christ on the earth, we have metamorphosed these facts as being “*the church which is His Body*” in type. This has resulted in dispensational confusion. By this replacement eisegeses¹ we have nurtured the principles upon which the Messianics flourish. ■

At the time of this writing, the Messianics are one of the fastest-

— *The Appearing of Christ*

1. *Eisegesis*: the interpretation of a text by reading into it one's own ideas (*Merriam-Webster*).



54 pp, PB

See order form.

This study briefly surveys alcohol related Hebrew and Greek words and some of their contexts, considers passages usually used to condemn the use of alcohol, and looks at a few common objections.

A Look at Alcohol in the Scriptures

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

[God brings forth] wine which makes man's heart glad (Psalm 104:15).

Wine was a blessing in Scripture (Proverbs 3:10), something to be received gratefully from God (Psalm 104:15). Like many things that God has graciously given to man, alcohol can be used or abused.

However, it is important that we do not confuse use with abuse, or drinking with drunkenness. To prohibit the use of alcohol, by pointing to verses about its abuse, would be like condemning the eating of food because of gluttony, or requiring sexual abstinence because of carnal sins. This is deceptive and erroneous religious reasoning.

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