

The Secret of

Power

and the

Enjoyment

of the

Lord

by Francis A. Schaeffer

There is seemingly a constant tension between a passion to uphold truth and a desire for love to flow among Christians and from Christians to unbelievers as well. Often in conservative movements such as ours, we emphasize—sometimes overemphasize—an orthodoxy of doctrine and practice while minimizing the absolute necessity of love and unity. Neglecting or underemphasizing either one is detrimental to our personal and church lives.

In this article, Francis A. Schaeffer deals with these two issues masterfully. Schaeffer himself was involved in a split in his denomination, in which he and others left the mainline part of the denomination because it was losing the true faith. But he also became deeply troubled by the wrong emphases he saw in the “conservative” group that he was a part of. He was always concerned to have correct doctrine, and he also had a heart for love and unity in the church.

I found this article a wonderful articulation of my own thoughts on these subjects; and it is my hope that we will all take to heart this message.

—Paul W. Lamicela

The Need for Both Purity and Love in the Christian Life

What is the secret of power? Certainly, as we consider Christianity today—true, Bible-believing Christianity—we must be impressed by the fact that there is not the consistent power that there has been in certain periods of the past. The same thing is also true of the enjoyment of the Lord. In our day, life is such that, while Christians do many things to serve the Lord, it is obvious from our faces and our conversation that few enjoy Him.

These faults tend to be equally true for us as individual Christians and for the Christian organizations in which we are. Those things that are needed to overcome these faults would also be the same for us as individual Christians and for our organizations.

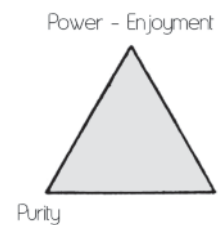
Purity

As we begin let us draw a triangle. We shall write at the apex of this triangle two words, *Power* and *Enjoyment*; and we shall write at the left of the triangle the word *Purity*.

First of all, the Bible is clear in its command for personal purity. There cannot be power or enjoyment without such purity. Some Christians seem to think that when we talk of personal purity all that is meant is giving up a few

amusements and habits. What a poor view of purity this is! Dealing with these things is indeed important, but this is only the ABC. We can be without hindering habits and amusements and still be far from true personal purity.

When we consider what the Bible teaches concerning purity we find that it is not a matter basically of outward things at all, but it is a matter of inward things. The Ten Commandments do not deal just with outward things, but they deal with the inward disposition of the heart. We can break each of the commandments inwardly without any outward act. This is most clearly shown by the fact that the last commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” deals entirely with inward dispositions and not with outward things at all. Outward things result from our inward disposition of covetousness, but covetousness in itself is an inward matter. This tenth com-



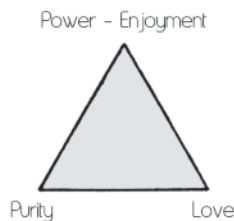
mandment is most searching; it is the negative side of the positive command of Christ that we should love all men as ourselves. We can have a covetous attitude in the wanting of what we do not have, and we can have an equally covetous attitude in determining to hold on to the possessions or leadership that we do have. Is there a simple test that I may apply to my life to find out if I am covetous? Yes, there is. Let me ask myself: If So and So, who has more possessions or leadership than I possess, should lose these, would I be inwardly pleased; or, if So and So, who has less possessions or leadership than I have, should begin to gain, would I be inwardly wretched? If I would, I have coveted. If covetousness is present I am not right inside; and to the extent that I am not right inside I do not possess personal purity. Is personal purity easy? The answer is, No. The battle is against the flesh all the way.

Let us notice, however, that true purity is more than even such a negative aspect concerning our innermost selves. True personal purity is not a bare negative. I am to love my neighbor as myself. True purity is based upon and leads to love. True purity and love stand together.

This word, then, we put at the right of the triangle.

However, the biblical presentation of purity includes more than personal purity. We find that the Word of God teaches that there is not only to be purity of the person, but purity of the external body of believers. Moses commands it, and from the Book of Judges on we find the constantly repeated illustration of what happened when the external body of the people of God forgot God's command to keep pure. When this happened, in came many things which soon destroyed the power of God's people. This is not just a lesson of the Old Testament, but it is also a lesson of the New. The lesson of the needed purity of the external body of believers is part of the warp and woof of every part of Scripture. Paul is very specific that those who are wrong in doctrine or life must be excluded from the external body of believers. This is ecclesiastical purity.

What happened when the visible church, the external body of believers, forgot to keep pure? There are many examples from church history, but let us examine two. The first is the case of the early church. As we study church history we find that in general the early church kept itself pure until the time of Constantine. Then Constantine made Christianity popular and Christianity forgot to keep itself pure. It allowed itself to be mixed in

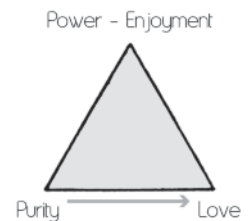


increasing measure with wrong doctrines and wrong practices. Then the church lost its true power and the Roman Catholic Church is the result.

Another clear illustration of what happens to the visible church when it does not keep its purity is the Church of the Nestorians. At one time this was a great body of believers stretching from India across the heart of China. Then they forgot to keep pure as a church, and today there is only a very small remnant in the Near East. If the Nestorian Church had kept pure, and therefore retained its power, perhaps today Asia would be Christian.

Personal purity and the purity of the external body of believers must go hand in hand. There is a tendency to minimize either one while giving the proper emphasis to the other. *Both* are needed if there is to be a real, and lasting, power and enjoyment of the Lord. Is it easy to maintain purity of the external body of believers? Is it easy to exercise discipline, to put aside men who are living a false life or teaching false doctrine, or failing in that, to step outside the camp to start anew? No, like personal purity, it is not easy, the battle is against the flesh all the way.

As in the matter of purity of life, so in the matter of purity of the church, separation must look in two directions. It is separation from the false, but it is also a separation to something positive. It must be separation to a deep love of God. If these things are not based upon and do not lead to a deep love, then it is only division and not separation in the biblical sense at all. Hence, our minds are again carried over to the other side of the triangle, "Love."



Love

Let us now consider the other side of the triangle, the side of love. Let us think especially at this moment upon what Christ said concerning our love for men. We are to love others as we love ourselves. This love for men falls into two categories. First, toward other Christians—we are to love these as our brothers in Christ. But second, let us not forget that while we are brothers *only* to those who have accepted Christ as their Savior, yet Christ's command is that we should love *all* men as our neighbors. We are to obey the lesson of the Good Samaritan. We must not minimize this love we are commanded to have to all men as our neighbors, simply because there is a clear distinction in the Bible be-

If we have true love for the Lord, the lost, and for our brothers in Christ, then we will be willing to pay a great price for personal purity and for the purity of the church. If we are not, then our love is somewhere defective.

tween our love to all men, as neighbors, and our love to our brothers in Christ.

There is a certain gentleness about really great Christians. There are many ways to observe this, but perhaps one of the best is to notice the tenderness for children in some of the great warriors of the past... Horatius Bonar of the nineteenth century was the same. How he emphasized the need of purity—purity of life and purity of doctrine! He was a warrior, but when we read his children's hymns they melt our hearts.

This love for men is not to be just a banner, not just a slogan, but it should show itself in practical ways in our lives. Our acts and our utterances in our contacts with men should show this love. We should show it by kindness in the small and large things of our daily living. The rule is that we should do to others as we desire that they should do to us. This should show itself in our dealings with those in our own organizations, in our dealings with those of other organizations with which we do not agree, and with unbelievers as well. We should deal fairly with men, including those who are our enemies for the Gospel's sake. True love results in fair dealing, in care that we deal with scrupulous honesty toward all men, both in the ordinary walks of life and in the field of Christian battle. Our walk should be such that even the blasphemer must know inwardly that we have dealt fairly with him. Rightness and love must go hand in hand or there is no real power. Showing a man to be wrong is only the first step; the final aim must be to lead him to full obedience to Christ. In dealing with the unbeliever our final desire for him must be his salvation, no matter how hopeless that seems. No man is beyond the infinite grace of God.

Those who struggle for purity of self and church easily tend to miss this side of the triangle. Purity of self and purity of the church are not ends in themselves. It will not even do to pursue these merely as a loyalty to principle. Purity of self and the purity of the church are only worthwhile when they are based upon love and lead to love.

Guarding Against Hardness of Heart

If we have come to the frame of mind where we are so occupied with the struggle against fleshly sin, or un-

belief, that we act as though any means is permissible, then the love has gone and the power has gone. Combat, to be for God's greatest glory, must be fought according to God's rules. It is possible to struggle for personal purity and the purity of the church without having the struggle based upon love and leading to a deeper love of God and man. When this is done it leads inevitably to dead orthodoxy, and dead orthodoxy is always the threshold to new heresy.

Is this easy? No, love, just like purity, is a battle against the flesh all the way.

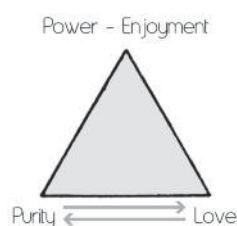
But the Bible takes this matter of love a step further. Let us notice in 1 Thessalonians 3:12 and 13, "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." As biblical thinking upon purity leads us to love, so biblical thinking upon love always leads us to purity.

Not Just Good Will or Kindness

Biblical love is not just a vapid good will or a vague kindness. There is something real and realistic about biblical love. God so loves His children, those who have accepted Christ as their Saviour, that He sometimes causes pain in chastisement. And true biblical love in us also sometimes must cause pain to men, including our brothers in Christ. When a father chastises a child he does it because he loves him. When Spurgeon raised his voice in his day it was because he understood both the teaching of biblical purity and biblical love. If we have true love for the Lord, the lost, and for our brothers in Christ, then we will be willing to pay a great price for personal purity and for the purity of the church. If we are not, then our love is somewhere defective. Our love must be shown in practical ways to the end that we together may be established unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father—and how much more is this important as the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ seems so near.

True love and true purity are like two sides of a coin, or like two sides of a mirror, one concave and one

convex. *They cannot be separated and we, for ourselves personally and for the leaders of the Christian organizations in which we are, must be certain that no choice is made between purity and love.* There is something wrong with us if we produce devotional literature and sermons, without literature and sermons for both kinds of purity; and there is something wrong with us if we produce literature and sermons in defense of the faith without devotional literature and sermons. The prayer that does not lead to consecrated combat for personal purity and purity of the external body of believers falls short; and combat which does not lead to an increase in public and private prayer falls short. And how twice miserable is the man who, lacking a clear view of love, begins to toy with a loss of purity in person or church; and how twice miserable is the man who, lacking a clear view of the need of personal or church purity, loses for some reason his view of love as well. May God deliver us from the missing of either side. The lack of either is not static: If we lack purity on small points, we shall tend to let larger things pass; if we lack love in dealing with our enemies, we shall tend to lack love in dealing with those closest to us. We may do many commendable things while being deficient on one side or the other, but our true power and our joy in the Lord will be proportionately impoverished. Christ's command is for both purity and love; and if there is to be true power and enjoyment of the Lord, both commands must be faithfully and equally obeyed.



One thing more. All this is as a tinkling cymbal and sounding brass if our end motive is not right. Philippians 1:11 reads, “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” The Lord tells us here what should be the end of the fruits of righteousness. The end of the fruits of righteousness should be the glory and praise of God. The reason we should want purity of ourselves and of the church, and the reason we should want love, should only be because of our love for our Lord.

In the second chapter of Revelation, we find Christ speaking to the Church of Ephesus. This church was a church at work. It was a church of patience—patience apparently in the midst of persecution for Christ's sake. It was a church that hated false doctrine. Christ praised them for all this; but one thing they lacked. They had left their first love. They had left their love for Christ. No one looking on from the outside could observe this, but

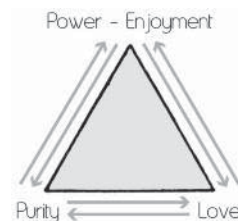
Christ knew it. They were doing all the things they had begun to do because they loved Him, but they no longer did these things because of a deep love for Christ. And the Lord said that if they did not return to this first love, He would take away their candlestick. That is, He would remove their testimony. There is only one *final* motive acceptable to God—that is, our love for Him.

No Conflict in True Love

There will never be conflict between true love for God and true love for men. If our love for the brethren and our love for the lost are love indeed, they will never take precedence over our love for our Lord and His commands. If our love for the Lord is love indeed, we shall not forget to wage our combat according to His rules.

Doing seemingly Christian things (including the seeking of purity of life and purity of the church, and stressing love) out of an inward desire for honor or praise, for leadership, for power or money, for a desire not to be disturbed, or for a desire to be proved right in our past decisions, is a vain thing. An inward love of power, or love of any of these other things, precludes the possibility that our motive is right before God, no matter how we may talk with our lips.

Is it easy to base our lives upon this one motive—our love for our Lord? Let us take time to allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts. It is not enough to say intellectually and theologically, “The chief end of man is to glorify God.” The question is, do I *love* Him with all my heart, my soul, and mind? This matter is the most difficult of all—it is *the* battle—against the flesh all the way. This battle must be fought every day of our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the “I die daily” of Paul.



Perhaps we, like a multitude of our brothers in the past and like some in our own day, will learn this lesson in the arena of persecution; but it would be well to seek to learn it, while there is yet time, upon our knees. When we have purity leading to love and love leading to purity, and all because we love the Lord—then there will be lasting power and enjoyment of the One who is the dear Lamb of God, slain for us, our Savior and our Lord. ◻