

## It Can Be Devilish Hard to Find

FILE: LOVE FINAL

by Desmond Ford

I know the wording and the grammar sounds wrong, but wait and see. It was while I was cycling the eight miles to the local library this morning that I thought of it—how devilishly hard it can be to find the most important thing. By “devilish,” I mean the devil has a hand in it.

You see, about once a week, when it can be fitted in, I go to the local public library to glance through the latest in religious and health magazines including *Christian Century*, and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. There are thousands upon thousands of books there, of course, but the main thing for which everyone should be looking is hard to find.

I have attended three universities and it was the same in their libraries. And often so in their classrooms also. It was similar at high school and elementary. And the realm of business proved to be the same. I ~~had~~ worked for years in the largest newspaper office in the southern hemisphere. In the giant building of about fifteen stories there were housed about 1,500 employees and most of them would have stared at me if I had told them what I was looking for. Most of them—there were a few glorious exceptions whom I knew who understood my search.

Then there is the vast realm of geography—the world of travel. I have been in thirty to forty countries, but it was not easy to find it in most of them. Often I thought I had found the opposite.

I came closest to it in the special world of friendship. What on earth am I talking about? What is the “it,” which is so devilishly hard to find? I told you—it is the main thing for which people should be seeking. It is the love of God.

Now at the public library on the newspaper rack, there is much about murder, rape, theft, divorce, and political and commercial chicanery. There ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> loads of material on matters historical, or geographical, or biographical, or economics. But not much on the love of God. That ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> devilishly hard to find, for the devil had a hand in the matter.

So, too, at the universities and schools. Church and state have been separated by an abyss so wide that God is a stranger in the realm of that glorious mind which He invented. And as for business: its mottoes ~~were~~<sup>are</sup> clear—“Blow you, Joe, I’ve got the life-belt,” “You’re either the butcher or the block.”

In the city near where we live there must be about 300,000 families. Now families are the product of human love. Surely the love of God can be found there. Yes, sometimes, but not usually.

But the churches! God will be there for a certainty. In word, yes, in symbolism, yes, but not always in every heart, not always in relationships. Sometimes still there is no room at the inn.

You understand that I am generalizing. For example in the library are books by C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Billy Graham, and other believers. But what are they among so many? And at university I have found teachers who because they loved God reflected His love. Schools too.

But Scripture is right when it affirms that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one,” and “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of God but of the evil one.”

No wonder Christ prayed as He did in that great High Priestly prayer on the eve of passing through the veil.

“... and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil,” John 17:14-16.

Now, too, in view of all this, the counsel of Paul is so applicable to each of us here below.” “... be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ....” Romans 12:2. “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold,” is the way one New Testament rendition paraphrases the first part.

This vain world is no friend to grace, and it is a daily, hourly, battle to see by faith the God who is love. If I am constantly exposed to all that is of the world, and of the devil, without finding what I most need, and what must be the breath of life to my soul, there is no way I can stand.

All of us ultimately become what we are most exposed to. Whatever gets our attention gets us. We are not just playing with fire if we live immersed in the world never coming up for spiritual air, we are begging for incineration, and come it will.

The two great commandments have to do with love but they only taunt us and frustrate us unless our heart is willingly captive to the revelation of God’s own love in Christ. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 John 4:16.

When Revelation repeatedly talks of the name of God being in the forehead of the faithful it is saying that God’s own character of love is stamped upon all true believers. As we come to faith in Christ we are sealed by the Holy Spirit. That sealing is the conveying to us as we are able to receive it, the heart and mind of God. That was the glorious image first reflected by our first parents before the Fall. “The fruit of the Spirit is love....”

In practical terms this article pleads for daily exposure to our chief necessity—the vision of God. If one looks ever so briefly to the sun in the heavens some of its glory continues to surround whatever we then turn to. So when through prayerful meditation on Calvary and similar themes, God’s glorious love shines upon us, the imprint will remain with us through the day. It may be devilishly hard to do, but do it we must.

To our great surprise we find that when we make the decision all heaven is ready and willing to aid us and what we first know as duty becomes transformed as privilege. Ask the Spirit to interpret nature to you. Let your home resonate with gospel music recurringly. Immerse yourself in biographies of those who lived love. Above all ,study and memorize the inspired accounts of the history and significance of the Cross of Christ.