Tough Love

The above title may seem as an almost "oxymoron"; that is an apparent contradiction. But upon closer inspection we see that many times love has to be tough. As a matter of fact, true love is often tough, especially when it needs to be tough. This love is true of God himself. God is tough when he needs to be tough. In Hebrews 12: 5 the text says, "for whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Revelation 3: 19 says, "as many as I love I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore and repent." God, through his word and the circumstances of life "chastens" or disciplines. He does this because he loves the souls of those whom he has created. As God loves, so we need to love as well. Let us consider some instances of tough love.

Every home needs tough love. Proverbs 13:24 says, "he that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Proverbs 19:18 says likewise, "chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Physical discipline is simply a command of God. Spanking is viewed by many in our liberal society as a crime. However, spanking is God's will. No parent should ever abuse a child. Hitting on the head, slapping a child around because the parent's temper is out of control, is not godly discipline. But spanking that is measured and planned because of bad behavior is needed for any child to learn respect for authority. With the liberal ideas floating around today, our society will only get worse.

Tough love is needed with each Christian's life. We cannot really love each other if we fail to correct each other. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:6, "faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Sometimes love hurts. Flattery is found everywhere, but a true friend that cares for the soul and spiritual well being of others will say what needs to be said. Jesus said, "if thy brother trespasses against thee, rebuke him, but if he repents, forgive him"(Luke 17:3). Brothers who are involved in error, either doctrinal or moral, need to be corrected. Courage and moral alertness are prerequisites to handle these situations. Hypocrites need not apply! But those brothers and sisters, who are really walking in the light of God's word, should care enough for their fellow brethren to speak up when the need arises.

Tough love is needed for the church as well. It is not a loving thing for the church to let gross doctrinal or moral failure alone. The Bible says, "Now we command you brethren, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he received of us"(2 Thessalonians 3:6). In 1 Corinthians 5, we have recorded a brother living in a state of fornication. It was not to be tolerated. Paul commanded the church that because this brother would not repent that he be "handed over to Satan" (1 Corinthians 5:4). This phrase means let Satan or his kingdom have him. God's people were no longer to fellowship him until of course he repented. Yes brethren, love is sometimes tough.

Holger