"Love Covereth a Multitude of Sins"
(1 Peter 4:7-11)

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer: above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: using hospitality one to another without murmuring: according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:7-11).

INTRODUCTION
This lesson is a meddling sermon. It is crucial. It will get close to you. It will clean house, starting with me. The Christian has to know that love covers sin.

I. WE ARE ALL ON CHARITY
We are all on charity. I could come home every night with a list of all the things my wife did wrong that day. We could spend half the night confessing, forgiving, and going over that list. But we solve that list by letting love cover a multitude of sins. We have to do this in order to live together.

We know what to say to send a person into orbit, don’t we? The people we love the most, we hurt the most. We get on each other’s nerves. We call it a personality conflict. I am slow and you are fast; you are quiet and I am loud; I am ready to go and you are late. All of us are imperfect. Read Galatians 6:4, 5. We all have burdens to bear.

I have spent money and time on the old Hodge house. Why? I do not intend to live in it, but I love that old house. It is my heritage. If that old house could talk, it would tell me exactly who I am. The love I have for that old house overrules the dirt, the unlevel floors, and the antiquity that make the house unusable. Love covers the inadequacies of that house.

Romans 5:5-8 says that “God loved us, while we were ugly.” John 3:16 says, “God so loved the world. . . .” First John 4:7-10 says,

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“Love covers a multitude of sins.” Peter’s statement can be traced back to Proverbs 10:12, where Solomon observed, “Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all transgressions.” That is a wonderful thought, isn’t it? Hatred causes war. Hatefulness is the biggest saboteur in the church. I can say what I want, and you can say what you want. We are relaxed. But all of a sudden a man comes in, and, immediately, we are all uptight. We are on the defensive. We have to guard what we say. Why? Because hate causes war.

Around our house, most of these things that hurt us are forgiven and forgotten. They are not written down. Some things have to be attended to; some things have to be written down. But in our daily, interpersonal relationships, love is the grease that allows our mechanisms to work.

In life, we have a choice. We are going to get hit and the issue is this: “Will you bounce back?” You can love or you can hate; you can go on or you can give up. Life is 10 percent what happens to us, and 90 percent how we respond to what happens to us.

Listen to Ephesians 4:31, 32. In one sweep of his pen, Paul cleans house. Note it: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.” Malice is a cancer of the soul. It
will eat you up. There is no need to forgive somebody if you are not going to be kind to him. Forgiveness comes out of kindness. We are to forgive “even as God” forgave us. God forgave me. I needed it. I forgive you. As God covered my sin, I cover yours. Isn’t this beautiful? Love covers a multitude of sins.

II. LOVE COMPELS

Love compels. Many wonder how I get by with murder. Sometimes I wonder myself. But there is a simple reason. I visit the hospitals, cry with people, counsel people, help people, pray with people. Then when I make a mistake, they say, “That is all right.”

Why? Because they love me. Here are Man A and Man B. They both make the same mistake. We accuse one and defend the other. Why the difference? The difference is not justice; the difference is not guilt. The difference is I love one and I do not love the other. We shoot a man we do not love and accept and defend a man we do love.

Any man you fear, you do not love. The Book says, “Love casts out fear.” The converse is also true: Fear casts out love. Concentrate on a man’s good points, not his bad points. Remember the old story about the woman who could not see anything wrong with anybody. They just pushed her and pushed her. They said, “Aye, what would you say about the devil?” The old lady said, “Well, he is persistent.” It is a good practice to look for good in people. It is easier to find good in people you love than in people you do not love.

III. LOVE COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS

Love covers a multitude of sins.” The Book says, “Love covers a multitude of sins.” “Love buries the hatchet.” Folks say, “Okay, I will shut up.” But in a big church I can avoid you and you can ignore me. You can sit on that side of the building and I can sit on this side of the building. Anytime you go, I will not, and when I go, you will not. We have only ended a hot war. We have traded a hot war for a cold one. Love goes further. Forgiveness makes reconciliation possible. When the Book says, “Love covers a multitude of sins,” it means we can eat together again, talk together again, walk together again, work together again. Love does not avoid; love does not play-like. Love does not say, “I have to, but I do not want to.” A little boy in church wanted to stand up. He kept trying to stand up. His mother shoved him down each time. Finally, she just read him the law of the Lord and said, “Sit down.” He said, “Momma, I may be sitting down in my body, but I am still standing up in my mind.”

We say, “I do not like John. I do not. Ugh! But if you say so, I’ll shut up. But I will not speak to him or feed him.” That is not Peter’s teaching.

If you want to criticize a fellow Christian, you need to buy him a meal first. If you do not love him enough to buy him a meal, you do not love him enough to criticize him. After you have fed him a meal, he is usually in a wonderful disposition. At that time, you can probably say anything you want to him. Love is deeper, sweeter, and better than pettiness. It transcends it. It purifies it.

For a husband and wife to have unity, unity has to mean more than their pettiness and little hurts. A man and woman enter marriage. That is a big contrast. A man and woman, in spite of all those differences, create a home. How? Because love covers a multitude of sins. Take any two sinners on earth and put them in Christ. If unity is their goal, they can overrule all their likes and dislikes and work together in the Lord. That is what the Book is teaching. Let us not be so picky. Let us not go around ruffling feathers.

Go back to the text. First, when we talk about love covering sin, remember that statement is not isolated. We cannot just reach into the Bible, pick out something, however good, and run off with it. What goes with verse 7? Sobermindedness. Peter said, “Be ye therefore sober.” Get your head straight.

Second, if you find out you are not getting along with a man, soberly evaluate and hit the floor on your knees. When we stop praying for people, we have trouble. The harder it is to get along with people, the harder we need to pray for them. Peter says, “Have a fervent love.” He did not just say “love,” he said “fervent love.” Do not let it get lukewarm and drift into coldness.

Third, use hospitality (4:9). That word hospitality always shows up in odd places. If you do not like a man, go eat with him, go fish with him, go play golf with him. Peter said, “Without grudging.”
Then Peter said, “Do according to what you can do.” Look at verse 11. He says, “Let every man do according to his ability.” We work for God in different ways. I am fast; you are slow. I am loud; you may be soft. But if we are serving God, why can’t we get along? Is there competition between the Bible class and the pulpit? Is there competition between preachers and deacons? Is there competition between elders and members?

CONCLUSION

The church is a laboratory. In this laboratory brethren learn how to live together. It is a laboratory where we learn to love, where we learn to forgive. If you cannot live together in the church, where on earth could you live together? The church is God’s laboratory of life.

When love covers sin, there is nothing to hide. It is covered, isn’t it? If it is covered, there is nothing remaining to hide. It is gone. You cannot see it. When there is nothing to hide, there is nothing to fear.

Our worship, our fellowship ought to reflect brethren at home, relaxed and free in the Lord. Peter said, “Love covers a multitude of sins.”

—Charles B. Hodge, Jr.