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The Three Battlegrounds by Francis Frangipane

Chapter 9 - Beware of the Stronghold of Cold Love (Part 2)

Love Without Commitment is Not Love

Matthew 24:10-12 NKJV

[10] And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. [11] Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. [12] And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Allow me to be perfectly clear: there is no such thing as love without commitment. The measure of one's love is found in the depth of his or her commitment to others. How often we have heard people say, "I loved once, but I was hurt." Or, "I was committed to Christian service, but they used me." When someone withdraws his commitment to a relationship, he is withdrawing his love. It is not one's commitment that grows cold; it is their love. It may not seem like they have become cold - they may still attend church, sing and look "Christian" - but inside they have become hard and separated from others. They have withdrawn from love. Because their commitment is shallow, they will be easily offended.

Jesus said, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come" (Matthew 18:7). In your walk there will be times when even good people have bad days. As long as you live on earth, there will never be a time when "stumbling blocks" cease to be found upon your path. People do not stumble over boulders but over stones - little things. To stumble is to stop walking and fall. Have you stumbled over someone's weakness or sin lately? Have you gotten back up and continued loving as you did before, or has that fall caused you to withdraw somewhat from walking after love? To preserve the quality of love in your heart, you must forgive those who have caused you to stumble.

Every time you refuse to forgive or fail to overlook a weakness in another, your heart not only hardens toward them, it hardens toward God. You cannot form a negative opinion of someone (even though you think they may deserve it!) and allow that opinion to crystalize into an attitude; for every time you do, an aspect of your heart will cool toward God. You may still think you are open to God, but the Scriptures are clear: "The one who does not love his brother whom

he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). You may not like what someone has done, but you do not have an option to stop loving them. Love is your only choice.

Many people will stumble over little faults and human weaknesses. These minor things are quickly pumped up by the enemy into great big problems. Oh, how frail are the excuses people use to justify withdrawing from others. In reality, these problems, often with a church or pastor, are a smokescreen which masks the person's lack of love.

The Greatest Commandments

An expert in the Law once asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment. His reply was wonderful: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus said that the second commandment is like the first. When you love God, your love for others will actually be like your love for God. The more you unconditionally love God, the more you will unconditionally love others.

You see, the kingdom of God is most perfectly revealed in our relationships with one another. We are being perfected into a unit (see John 17). To have the kingdom, we must be committed to one another as individuals and as churches. If Christ accepts us while we are still imperfect, we must also accept one another. The people who possess the kingdom of God in its reality are people who overcome the obstacles of each other's faults. They help each other become what God has called them to be: the living body of Jesus Christ.

Remember, the goal of pulling down the stronghold of cold love is to see the oneness of Christ's body revealed. You will be challenged in this, but if you persist, you will discover the height and depth, the length and breadth of Christ's love. You will become a body filled and flooded with God himself.