

# The Bulwark

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January 8, 2023

## GOD LOVES YOU, AND I'M TRYING

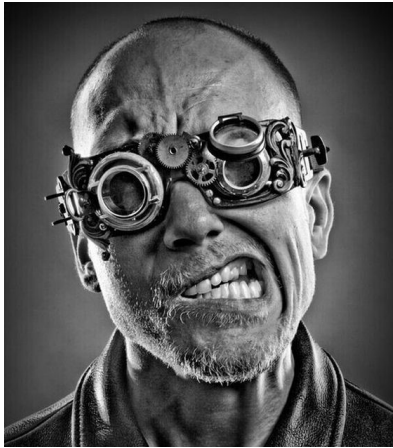
Have you ever felt like you are trying to be told something, but haven't really gotten the memo so to speak? Such seems to be the case with me the past few days. I found an old book marker that was given to me with the icon of the "Have A Nice Day" face on it, only with the words "Smile God Loves You". While I appreciate the sentiment expressed, it is just a tad too "cutesy" and that must have been the reason it was squirreled away in the bottom desk drawer. Where it currently resides once again. But it came to mind a day or two later, when driving I saw a bumper sticker with same iconic face on it, with the words on it, Smile, God Loves You And I'm Trying". Okay, now I got the "memo" and my mind began whirling about how many people are "trying" to do for me what God already does.

Is it really necessary for people to exert extra effort in order to find me, at the very least somewhat likeable? Loveable, well now that is a whole different story.

*"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* (1John 4:10) Earlier in John had asserted, *"God is love."* Predicated on that fact, it stands to reason that God would love mankind, and would do all in order to make manifest that tremendous love (see Romans 5:6-11; John 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:4-10) Now the real question arises for each one of us, what kind of person ought we to be, in light of the type of person God would have us to be? In short am I "lovable"? Or for that matter even "likeable?"

Directing the focus on me, in my life am I characterized by seeking the best interests (Philippians 2:1-4)? Can it be said of me that in my daily walk that I employ the fruit of the Spirit in all my dealings with others (Galatians 5:22-24)? Moreover, have I integrated into my life a like attitude as that of Paul's as expressed in 1Corinthians 9:19-22? Then again, am I optimistic and

hopeful or a curmudgeon in whose company few people can barely tolerate? Vital questions that must be asked by each one of us individually and answered.



Realizing that perhaps I may not be the most lovable person to be around, should cause me (or for that matter anyone doing an honest self assessment) to be all the more understanding. Being intimately aware of the fact that I am a work in progress and by no stretch of the imagination can I assert that others have no need to be patient, compassionate and understanding of me. Solomon sheds some light on this line of thought as seen in Ecclesiastes 7:20-22. *"Indeed, there*

*is not a righteous man on earth who constantly does good and who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken so that you will not bear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others."* While we may not have actually "cursed others" as we understand it today, nevertheless the point is well taken and we stand guilty in other areas to be sure.

So if I am really working on becoming the person God would have me to be, when it comes to "loving the unlovable", it shouldn't present so much of a problem. That is if I keep in mind that others have extended to me love, when at times I may not have been all that "lovable". How dare I give anything less to others, when patience, understanding, compassion, care and such like was extended to me.

*"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."* (Luke 6:27-28) *"And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way. And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them."* (Luke 6:31-32)

*"And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you"* (1Thessalonians 3:12) (wbe)