

"THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS"

The Greatest Of These Is Love (13:13)

INTRODUCTION

1. In his discourse on spiritual gifts, Paul praised the value of love...
 - a. Introducing it as "a more excellent way" - **1Corinthians 12:31: *But be zealous for the better gifts* . And I show to you* still a surpassingly-better way.***
 - b. Emphasizing its necessity along with any ability or service we might have - **1Co 13:1-3: *If I speak with the languages of men and of messengers, but do not have love* , I have become like noisy brass or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and if I know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so-then to remove mountains, but if I do not have love* , I am nothing. And if I handout all of my possessions and if I give my body that* I would be burned, but if I do not have love* , it profits me nothing.***
 - c. Explaining its abiding superiority over spiritual gifts - **1Corinthians 13:8: *Love* never* falls short. But if there are propesies, they will be done-away; if there are foreign languages, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done-away.***
2. He even praised its value over faith and hope...
 - a. Abiding virtues in of themselves - **1Corinthians 13:13a: *But these three are remaining now: faith, hope, love* ,***
 - b. Yet love is "the greatest of these" virtues - **1Corinthians 13:13b: *and the greater of these is love* .***

[Why is love so highly valued by Paul? And if it is such a great virtue, how should we manifest in our lives? These questions I wish to address in this study, first by summarizing...]

I. THE GREATNESS OF LOVE

A. LOVE MOTIVATED GOD TO SAVE US...

1. Out of love for the world, God gave His Son - **John 3:16-17: *For* God so loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, in order that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but may have everlasting life. For* God did not send the Son into the world in order that he might judge the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 1John 4:9-10: *In this, the love* of God was****

manifested in us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. 4:10 In this is love* , not that we loved* God, but that he loved* us and sent his Son to be the atonement on behalf of our sins.*

2. The magnitude of God's love is seen when we consider that it was expressed while we were yet sinners - **Romans 5:6-8:** *For* when* we were still weak, according to the proper time, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly. For* scarcely will one die on behalf of a righteous man; for* perhaps someone might even dare to die on behalf of the good man. But God is establishing his own love* toward us, in that when* we were still sinners, Christ died on our behalf.*

B. LOVE MOTIVATED CHRIST TO DIE FOR US...

1. The Father's love toward the Son motivated the Son to love us - **John 15:9:** *Just-as the Father has loved* me, I have also loved* you* . Abide in my love* .*
2. Such love then motivated Christ to die for us - **John 15:13:** *No one has greater love* than this: that* someone should lay down his life on behalf of his friends. Ephesians 5:2: and walk in love* , just-as Christ also loved* us and gave himself up on our behalf as an offering and a sacrifice to God* for an aroma of a sweet-fragrance.*

C. LOVE MOTIVATES US TO LOVE FOR CHRIST...

1. The love of Christ compelled Paul to live for Him – **2 Corinthians 5:14-15:** *For* the love* of Christ is holding us together with him, having judged this: that one died on behalf of all, consequently* , all died; 5:15 and he died on behalf of all, that* those who are living should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died and rose again on behalf of them.*
2. Paul's life of faith was thus influenced by Christ's love for him - **Galatians 2:20:** *I have been crucified together with Christ. I am now no longer living, but Christ is living in me and that life which I am now living in the flesh, I am living in faith, the faith, which is of the Son of God, who loved* me and gave himself up on my behalf.*

D. LOVE MOTIVATES US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER...

1. The love of Christ should inspire us to love one another - **John 13:34:** *I am giving to you* a new commandment, that* you* should love* one another; just-as I have loved* you* , that* you* also should love* one another.*

2. The love of God should likewise move us to love one another
- **1John 4:11: *Beloved, if God so loved* us, we also ought to love* one another.***

Love can and should be a very powerful, motivating force in our lives. We have seen how it prompted God and Christ to express their love for us. The greatness of love can also be seen in how we should express it in our lives.

II. **THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE**

A. **TOWARD GOD AND CHRIST...**

1. By keeping the commandments of God and Christ - **John 14:15,21, : *If you* love* me, keep my commandments: He who holds my commandments and is keeping them, that one is he who loves* me and he who loves* me will be loved* by my Father and I will love* him and will manifest myself to him. 23-24: Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves* me, he will keep my word and my Father will love* him and we will come to him and will make* our abode with him. 14:24 He who does not love* me, does not keep my words. And the word which you* hear is not mine, but the Father's, he who sent me. 15:10,14: If you* keep my commandments, you* will abide in my love* ; just-as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love* . 15:14 You* are my friends, if you* practice as many things as I command you* .***
2. By loving our brethren in Christ - **John 15:12: *This is my commandment, that* you* should love* one another, just-as I have loved* you* . 1John 4:20-21: If anyone should say, I love* God and then should hate his brother, he is a liar; for* he who does not love* his brother, whom he has seen, how is he able to love* God, whom he has not seen? And we have this commandment from him, that* he who loves* God should also love* his brother.***

-- Great is God's love toward us; shall we not love God with great zeal in return?

B. **TOWARD OUR BRETHREN...**

1. By helping them when they are in physical need - **1John 3:16-18: *We have known love* in this, because that man laid down his life on our behalf and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brethren. But whoever should have the world's good life and should view his brother having need and then should lock his heart* from him, how does the***

love of God abide in him? My little children, we should not love* in word, nor with the tongue, but in work and in truth.*

- a. Providing as we have ability and opportunity
 - b. Loving them in deed and in truth
2. By helping them when they are in spiritual need - **1Peter 4:8: *But before all things, having the intense love * * for yourselves, because love* will hide a multitude of sins. James 5:19-20: Brethren, if anyone among you* are misled from the truth and someone should return him to it; let him know, that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will hide a multitude of sins.***
- a. Bringing them back to the Lord
 - b. Loving them with a truly fervent love
3. By setting the example in loving God and keeping His commandments - **1John 5:2: *We know in this that we love* the children of God, whenever we love* God and whenever we are keeping his commandments.***
- a. If we truly love one another, we will encourage them by providing a good example
 - b. Only then can we really know that we love the children of God

-- Does our example express a proper measure of love toward our brethren?

C. TOWARD OUR ENEMIES...

1. Remember that God loved us while we were still "enemies" - **Romans 5:6-10: *For* when* we were still weak, according to the proper time, Christ died on behalf of the ungodly. For* scarcely will one die on behalf of a righteous man; for* perhaps someone might even dare to die on behalf of the good man. But God is establishing his own love* toward us, in that when* we were still sinners, Christ died on our behalf. Then* much more, having been now justified in his blood, we will be saved from the wrath of God through him. For* if, when* we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved by his life;***
 - a. While we were "ungodly"
 - b. While we were "sinners"
2. As children of God, we are to be like our Heavenly Father – **Matthew 5:44-48: *But I am saying to you* , Love* your * enemies, speak well of those who curse you* , do good things to those who hate***

you and pray on behalf of those who are railing at you* and are persecuting you* . Do this* that you* may become sons of your* Father who is in the heavens, because his sun rises upon the evil and the good and it rains upon the righteous and the unrighteous. For* if you* love* those who love* you* , what reward do you* have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you* only greet your* friends, what are you* doing more-than others? Are not even the tax collectors doing so? Therefore you* will be complete, just-like your* Father who is in the heavens is complete.*

- a. Loving our enemies
 - b. Blessing those who curse us
 - c. Doing good to those who hate us
 - d. Praying for those who spitefully use us and persecute us
3. Just as Jesus and Stephen did toward their persecutors - **Luke 23:34: Now Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for* they do not know what they are doing. Acts 7:60: Now having placed his knees down, he cried with a loud voice, Lord, do not weigh this, their sin, to them. And having said this, he fell-asleep.**

-- Loving the unlovable and ungrateful is the highest expression of love!

CONCLUSION

1. The apostle Paul had experienced the greatness of God's love...
 - a. In his own conversion, for which he was thankful - **1Timothy 1:12-16: And I have gratitude to the one who empowered me, namely, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he deemed me faithful, placing me into his service; even though I was a former blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man, but I was shown-mercy, because I did it being ignorant in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord overwhelmed me with the faith and love* which is in Christ Jesus. Faithful is the word and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost. But I was shown-mercy because of this, that* in me as foremost, Jesus Christ might show all his patience, for a pattern of those who are afterward about to believe on him* for everlasting life.**
 - b. In enduring persecution, which gave him great hope - **Romans 8:35-39: Who will separate us from the love* of Christ? Shall affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? Just-as it has been written, 'Because of you we are slain the whole day. We were counted as sheep of the slaughter.' {Psa 44:22} But we are victorious in all these things through**

him who loved us. For* I have confidence, that neither death, nor life, nor messengers, nor principalities, nor powers, nor present things, nor future things, nor height, nor depth, nor some other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love* of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. We too have experienced the greatness of God's love...
 - a. In our own conversion...are we thankful?
 - b. In our daily living...presuming that we are walking in love!

Love is indeed the greatest of virtues. When properly understood and

manifested in our lives, it serves as the basis for our **faith** and **hope**!

**"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."
- 1Corinthians 13:13**

Have you responded to the love of God by obeying the gospel of Christ? Are you walking in love, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us (**Ephesians 5:2**)...?

and walk in love* , just-as Christ also loved* us and gave himself up on our behalf as an offering and a sacrifice to God * for an aroma of a sweet-fragrance.