

Love

Introduction:

1. Love is the greatest of the three special subjects listed in 1 Corinthians 13:13.
2. By examining a number of passages, especially 1 Corinthians 13, we can understand why love is such an important subject in Christianity.
3. The Bible speaks of various types of love, including:
 - a. "*brotherly love*" (Romans 12:10)
 - b. "*charity*" [actively seeking the welfare of other people even though it may not be deserved, as illustrated in Matthew 5:44].
4. In this lesson we are studying Scriptures that relate to this latter type of love.

Discussion:

- I. CHRISTIANS MUST LOVE EACH OTHER
 - A. Jesus commanded His followers to love one another (John 13:34-35).
 1. Jesus described His command as being "*new*" [His love is the pattern -- John 15:12-13].
 2. Jesus' followers are to be identified as such by their love for each other.
 - B. The New Testament letters repeatedly teach Christians to love each other (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 3:14; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:10-11).
 - C. While these passages teach Christians to love each other, . . .
- II. 1 CORINTHIANS 13 EXPLAINS WHY CHRISTIAN LOVE IS ESSENTIAL
 - A. The letter we call 1 Corinthians shows that the church in Corinth was plagued by a number of problems that were actually symptoms of a more serious problem.
 1. The members of this congregation:
 - a. were divided into various factions (1:11-12)
 - b. were extending fellowship to a fornicator (5:1-2)
 - c. were settling their differences by going to court (6:1, 6)
 - d. were experiencing difficulties over eating meat offered to idols (8:12)
 - e. were not observing the Lord's Supper properly (11:20-21)
 - f. were exalting certain spiritual gifts and looking down on others (ch.12 & 14).
 2. These matters indicate that the church in Corinth suffered from a lack of love.
 - a. Christians are to do everything with love (16:14).
 - b. However, love appeared to be lacking in everything these Christians did.
 3. (12:31) Paul said he was showing this congregation "*a more excellent way.*"
 - B. In ch.13, we are shown three reasons why the more excellent way includes love.
 1. (vs.1-3) The more excellent way includes love because without love we are nothing.
 - a. (vs.1-2) This principle applied to spiritual gifts.
 - b. (vs.3) It also applies to all acts of benevolence and sacrifice.
 2. (vs.4-7) The more excellent way includes love because of its characteristics.
 - a. Negatively, love does not envy [is not jealous], does not vaunt itself [brag or boast], is not puffed up [arrogant], does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek its own [insist on having its own way], is not easily provoked, does not think evil [hold a grudge], and does not rejoice in iniquity [unrighteousness].
 - b. Positively, love suffers long [is patient], is kind, rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.
 - c. True love is determined by behavior -- not by words (1 John 3:18).
 3. (vs.8-13) The more excellent way includes love because love is everlasting.
 - a. Love never fails, but spiritual gifts would end when "*that which is perfect*" came.
 - 1) If the Corinthians continued using their gifts without love, when the gifts disappeared, only strife and division would remain.
 - 2) If they used their gifts with love, when the gifts no longer existed, love would continue.
 - b. Even though faith will eventually become sight and hope will become reality, love will continue and is therefore the greatest.