

Love, The Greatest of These

In I Corinthians 13:13 the Bible says, "*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*" In the famous "Love Chapter," God declares that of all the gifts and commodities given to a Christian, love is the chief. What makes love the greatest?

I. Love never fails.

I Corinthians 13:8 says, "*Charity never faileth....*" One day there will not be a need for prophecies: "*they shall fail.*" One day all prophecies will be fulfilled. There will not be a need for languages: "*whether there be tongues, they shall cease.*" One day we shall all speak the same language in heaven, Babel's confusion will be reversed (Genesis 11:7-9). One day accumulation of Bible knowledge will be of no benefit: "*whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*" In I Corinthians 13: 12 it says, "*Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*"

In heaven love will continue on. Faith will be swallowed in the victory (I Corinthians 15:54; I John 5:4). "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1). "*...for we shall see him as he is*" (I John 3:2). And hope is realized in the rapture! "*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13). Think of it, even faith and hope will evaporate in the reality of heaven. "*But hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*" (Romans 8:24,25). I Corinthians 13:10, 11 says, "*But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*"

II. Love conquers all.

In verses four through seven of I Corinthians 13, God says His great love is patient: "*suffereth long,*" benign: "*is kind,*" unselfish: "*envieth not,*" humble: "*vaunteth not itself;*" makes no parade: "*is not puffed up;*" has good manners: "*doth not behave itself unseemly,*" is not possessive: "*seeketh not her own,*" is self-controlled: "*is not easily provoked,*" forgives and forgets: "*thinketh no evil,*" is not glad because of wrong-doing: "*rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,*" never gives up: "*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*"

Love's attributes can defeat any attack against the family or church. Love is the rock of Gibraltar. It will hold when the world's on fire. There is an inextricable link between God and true love. This truth is evident in the words "*God is love*" (I John 4; 8). Love can only lose if God's strength is not available. "*Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might*" (Isaiah 33:13).

III. Love brought us salvation.

"*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*" (John 15:13). When God, in His undying mercy looked down upon this helpless and hopeless race, He determined to save the believer. So, in His great love He condescended to earth, walked among us, and allowed sinful man to nail Him to the cross. It was not the nails that held Him; it was His love for us that kept Him on the cross.

A little boy was quoting John 3:16 and when he came to the phrase, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son...*" he childishly got his tongue in a tangle and said, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only 'forgotten' son....*" In reality the child's speech may have missed the quote, but his theology was on the mark. For you see, God, the Father was willing (for the duration of the cross) to "forget" His only begotten Son so that we as believers would never be forgotten. Christ cried "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46). He was forsaken so we would never have to be forsaken. Love is the only explanation for this sacrifice.

- Pastor Pope -

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