

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

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Introduction:

- A. In one of the most famous chapters in the Bible, we find one of its most memorable phrases: "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).
- B. The greatness of love is indicated by the constant emphasis upon it in both Testaments of Scripture.
- C. Thus it behooves us to investigate what the Bible teaches on this vital subject.

I. THE MANDATE TO LOVE

A. Old Testament Mandates

- 1. Leviticus 19:18: "...thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself..."
- 2. Deuteronomy 10:19: "Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

B. New Testament Mandates

- 1. Matthew 22:37: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God..."
- 2. Matthew 22:39: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor..."
- 3. Romans 12:10: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love..."
- 4. Romans 13:8: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."
- 5. 1 Corinthians 16:14: "Let all that ye do be done in love."
- 6. Colossians 3:14: "Above all these things, put on love..."
- 7. 1 Thessalonians 4:9: "...ye are taught of God to love one another."
- 8. Hebrews 13:1: "Let brotherly love continue..."
- 9. 1 Peter 2:17: "...Love the brotherhood..."
- 10. 1 John 3:11: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."
- 11. 1 John 3:23: "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."
- 12. 1 John 4:21: "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

II. THE MOTIVATION TO LOVE

A. What is our motivation to love God?

- 1. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).
- 2. Compare John 3:16 with 1 John 3:16.

B. What is our motivation to love one another?

- 1. Because God loves us. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love

- one another” (1 John 4:11).
2. Because if we do not love one another we do not know God (4:7-8, 20).
3. Because if we do so, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us (4:12).
4. Because if we do so, we dwell in God (4:16).

C. What is our motivation to love our enemies?

1. Because it is commanded of us by God (Matt. 5:44).
2. Because if we do so, we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:45).

III. THE MEASURE OF LOVE

A. How much should we love God?

1. Jesus taught, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy sould, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37).
2. The Law of Moses taught the same thing (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 30:6).

B. How much should we love mankind?

1. “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (1 Thess. 3:12).
2. “„ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you brethren, that ye increase more and more” (1 Thess. 4:9-10).

C. Our love for both God and man should be unfeigned and fervent (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8).

IV. THE MANNER OF LOVE

A. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

B. Behold the manner of Christ’s love during His earthly ministry.

1. It was an educating love (Mark 10:21).
2. It was an evident love (John 11:5, 36).
3. It was an enduring love (John 13:1, 23).
4. It was an exacting love (John 15:9-17).
5. It was an exemplary love (John 13:34-35; 15:12-13; 1 John 3:16).

C. The manner of our love is to be patterned after the manner of His love (Eph. 5:2).

V. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF LOVE

A. How do we manifest (make visible) our love for God?

1. By keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 21-24; 15:10-14; 1 John 2:3-5; 5:2-3).
2. This obedience must be sincere (1 Cor. 13:2-3; Eph. 6:24).

B. How do we manifest (make known) our love for our fellow man?

1. Not merely by what we say, but by what we do (1 John 3:17; James 2:14-17; 1 Pet. 3:8).
 2. By what we don't say and do (Prov. 17:9, 19; Gal. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 3:12).
- C. How do we manifest (make known) our love for our enemies?
1. By blessing them when they curse us (Matt. 5:44).
 2. By doing good to them that hate us (5:44).
 3. By praying for them even if they spitefully use us and persecute us (5:44).
- D. According to 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, true love is manifested:
1. By What Love Does
 - a. It is longsuffering
 - b. It is kind
 - c. It rejoices in the truth
 - d. It bears all things
 - e. It believes all things
 - f. It hopes all things
 - g. It endures all things
 2. By What Love Does Not Do
 - a. It does not envy
 - b. It vaunteth not itself (is not rash)
 - c. It is not puffed up
 - d. It does not behave itself unseemly
 - e. It seeketh not her own
 - f. It is not easily provoked
 - g. It does not think evil
 - h. It does not rejoice in iniquity
 - i. It never fails

Conclusion:

- A. A popular song from years ago suggested that "What The World Needs Now Is Love."
- B. Indeed, the world needs love, but not love as the world defines it.
- C. If we love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind then there we will gladly obey each and every other commandment.
- D. If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, the world will be a much better place (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14)! Love is the greatest!