

DIVINE LOVE

BIBLE TEXT : I Corinthians 13:1-13

LESSON 355 **Junior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Corinthians 13:13).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

² And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

⁴ Charity suffereth long, *and is* kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

⁸ Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.

⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

¹⁰ But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

¹¹ 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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Love

"God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." God's people have His love in their heart because God is with them. When people are saved, their sins are forgiven and God puts His love within them. When they are sanctified, their heart is cleansed and they have more of God's love. Only those who are saved have true Christian love, because God reserves it for His own.

The love that God puts in the hearts of His people is called Christian love and brotherly love. It is also referred to as "charity" — but it has a deeper meaning than giving to the poor. This charity, or love, is a desire for the well-being, comfort, and happiness of others. It is shown by our actions and feelings toward others.

The Importance of Love

To love God's people is one proof that we are His own. Jesus said: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). In the writings of Peter we read, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves" (I Peter 4:8). Above all things! Love is mentioned first in the list of qualities that make up the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22). Love has been called "the greatest thing in the world."

Measuring Stick

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about Christian love, which he called "charity." This portion of Scripture is the love chapter. It is a measuring stick by which we can measure our Christian lives. As we study this lesson, let us lay our lives alongside this measuring stick that God may show us how we can improve and be better Christians for the Lord. No matter where they live, who they are, or how young or old they are, all Christians have these qualities because of the love of God in their lives.

Without Love

Paul makes a contrast between love and some other things, which may be good. Many people have desired to speak the language of others; yet all people can understand the language of love, shown by a smile, by sympathy, and by other acts of kindness.

Many people would like to speak in an eloquent manner. Moses felt his lack of eloquence. When God called him to lead the Children of Israel from Egypt, Moses said: "I am not eloquent, . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10). But God said that He would teach Moses what to say. To speak in a beautiful manner is admirable, but it is not the most important thing. Paul compared eloquence without love with the hollowness of "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1).

Paul said that he would be nothing if he had not love; even if he was able to prophesy and tell of future events; even if he could understand the deep mysteries of God; even if he had knowledge and the learning from books and teachers; even if he

things.

¹² For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

had faith to move a mountain. Greater than all these is God's love in the heart of His people.

Some people are generous. They give to the poor and needy. Others are loyal and sacrificing even to the giving of their lives. But without the love of God, these things profit nothing of lasting value. These gifts, which Paul mentioned are excellent, but they are not enough. One must have God's love.

Patient and Kind

"Charity suffereth long." The love of God will give one patience. Job was patient because he was a man of God. When Job lost his children and possessions he said: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). As Job continued to suffer, he was resigned to the will of God. He said: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined" (Job 23:10, 11). Are you patient when things seem to go wrong? Perhaps you need the love of God in your heart to give you patience, or maybe you need to grow in patience and in the love of God.

"Charity . . . is kind." In Paul's writings to the Ephesians we read, "Be ye kind one to another" (Ephesians 4:32). Joseph is a good example of one who showed kindness, even to those who had mistreated him. Joseph's brothers hated him, and sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt; but in time of famine, Joseph kept his brothers alive by giving food to them. He said to them, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones." "And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Genesis 50:21). To whom are you kind? Only to the ones who are kind to you?

Humble

God's love also makes a person content instead of envious. We are told to "be content" with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5). We read, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy 6:6). Those who are envious begrudge the good that others have. Nothing good can be said concerning envy. There are accounts in the Bible of people who were filled with envy, and every account is sad. Cain killed his brother because of envy. The men who were responsible for having Daniel put in the lions' den did so because of envy. Christ's accusers delivered Him to be crucified, because of envy.

Love causes one to be humble instead of puffed up. In the Word of God we are taught humility. Read about being humble, in Proverbs 22:4; James 4:10; I Peter 5:5, 6. One of the things that God requires of us is to "walk humbly" with Him (Micah 6:8).

Unselfish

"Charity . . . doth not behave itself unseemly." Is it being well behaved to keep on teasing, or to pout when our request is refused? If things do not go their way, some children have a tantrum and make others miserable in some way until they get what they want. But those children do not have the love of God in their heart.

"Seeketh not her own." Love is so unselfish that she does not seek even the things, which belong to her. How different from the spirit of the world, which causes people to try to get all they can, whether they are entitled to it or whether it belongs to others! True happiness does not come by getting, but comes by giving. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

A New Heart

"Charity . . . is not easily provoked." How many people have tried in vain to control their temper! When they were provoked

they said and did things for which afterward they were sorry. Being easily provoked leads to anger, hatred, and revenge. When one's temper is lost, neither the things said nor done are good. Not much can be done to control the temper, but the source of the trouble — the heart — can be made right. The love of God puts in that quality which is not easily provoked.

"Charity . . . thinketh no evil." A Christian does not plan evil, and he does not meditate upon evil. He is not suspicious of others, watching for evil in their lives. Philippians 4:8 gives a list of things that are good to think about: things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report: "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Enduring

"Charity never faileth." It is enduring. Other things will fail, pass away, or give way to new things. Faith, hope, and love now abide — but in Heaven there will be no need of faith and hope. Only love will endure. Concerning these three Paul said, "The greatest of these is charity." Faith and hope are very important and necessary in the life of a Christian. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the victory, which overcomes the world (I John 5:4). We are told to "earnestly content for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Hope is a part of the Christian's armour — "for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (I Thessalonians 5:8). Hope is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19). Faith is our attitude toward God. Hope is for ourselves. But greater than these is charity or love. Charity is the love of God, which causes us to love our neighbour.

As you studied this lesson and compared your Christian life with the measuring stick, did you find room for improvement? Remember that a Christian is always growing, increasing the amount of each Christian grace. Peter said that we should give all diligence and add to these qualities: faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and charity. By Christian-growing we will be able to bear spiritual fruit and make our "calling and election sure," and to be with Jesus in His everlasting Kingdom. But if we lack these things we will fail of eternal life. (2 Peter 1:5-11 ⁵ And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶ And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷ And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸ For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹ For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ)

QUESTIONS

1. What is another name for charity?
2. How does one get charity?
3. How important is the love of God?
4. How can one tell who has the love of God?
5. Read in I John 4:19 why we love the Lord.
6. How can people tell that we are Jesus' followers?
7. Jesus taught us not only to love our neighbours but also to love whom?
8. What happens if a Christian does not grow?
9. In the last verse of our lesson we are told that love is greater than what other two things that abide?