

DIVINE LOVE

BIBLE TEXT : I Corinthians 13:1-13

LESSON 355 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Colossians 3:14).

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

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Charity -- The Love of God

1. Love is the sum and substance of all true religion. Tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, benevolence, and zeal for the truth -- these do not accomplish salvation, I Corinthians 13:1-3;

Deuteronomy 6:5

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Leviticus 19:18

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Mark 12:28-31

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.

31 And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Luke 10:25-28

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

2. The graces of charity or divine love are analysed, I Corinthians 13:4-7;

Proverbs 10:12

12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

1 Peter 4:8

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

2 John 1:5

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

3. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge shall cease, but love abides forever, I Corinthians 13:8-10;

Colossians 3:14

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the

became a man, I put away childish 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.

bond of perfectness.

4. Man's imperfect state is described, I Corinthians 13:11, 12;

2 Corinthians 3:18

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:7

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

1 John 3:2

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

4. The greatest thing is love, I Corinthians 13:13;

Matthew 5:44

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Romans 13:10

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

John 13:34

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 15:9

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

John 15:13

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:17

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Hebrews 13:1

1 Let brotherly love continue.

1 John 3:1

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:17-19

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

NOTES:

The Corinthian Church

Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth, preaching the Gospel to the Corinthians. A strong church had been established; but

after Paul's departure, division and erroneous doctrine had crept in among them. The Greeks were fond of having men's persons in admiration. This Epistle was written by Paul to correct these things. This thirteenth chapter is a marvel and is considered one of the greatest in the whole Bible. It should be memorised by everyone.

Someone has said: "Love is properly the image of God in the soul; for God is love. By faith we receive from our Maker; by hope we expect a future and eternal good; but by love we resemble God; and by it alone are we qualified to enjoy heaven and be one with Him throughout eternity." Love is the fulfilling of the Law. The Law did not have power to change men's lives, but Christ, who is love personified, did!

The New Birth

The Apostle John declares that "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." A measure of divine love is imparted to us through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, when we are born again. There is a difference between divine love and human love. We are born into this world with a natural love that gives parents a love for their children and more or less a love for mankind. Even animals have a love for their own offspring. But mingled with that love is the human heart is sin, which was planted there when man disobeyed God and fell from the state of pure love and innocency. To be restored to the image of God, man must be changed. He must be made a new creature. Jesus called this the new birth. Men have tried to substitute many things for the new birth. They have tried education, reforms, church-joining, confirmation, kindness, helping the poor and needy, as substitutes for a change of heart. Jesus said he that "climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). Man's efforts ever to enter Heaven by any other way than by the new birth are futile. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Sanctification

While love enters the heart at the new birth, it is possible to have "our love made perfect" (I John 4:17) by a deeper experience known as sanctification, a second definite, instantaneous work of grace. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (I John 2:5). "Perfect love" is another term for "holiness," "Christian perfection," or "sanctification," and is made possible through the removal of the root of sin by the cleansing Blood of Jesus Christ. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Tongues

There are many silver-tongued orators behind the sacred desk. We often hear the expression, "He speaks beautiful English." But if divine love has never filled the heart of that speaker, all his oratory, all his finely framed sentences, all his beautiful English are as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. Many a soul has gone from a high-steepled church with his hunger for spiritual food unsatisfied because the minister failed to have the one essential thing -- divine love.

Faith

We are told in Hebrews, the eleventh chapter, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and that through faith kingdoms were subdued, mouths of lions

were stopped, and the dead were raised to life again. Jesus commended the faith of the Syrophenician woman who had so humbly contended for the healing of her daughter; and He said, "O woman, great is thy faith." Let us remember also the faith of the centurion, who had begged for the healing of his servant. Jesus said that He had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel! Wonderful things have been wrought through faith. But Paul declares that unless that faith is coupled with divine love in a heart, the soul is profited nothing. Faith alone will never be able to unlock the pearly gates of Heaven.

Fame

Many men of wealth have given their money for benevolent causes; they have endowed colleges, hospitals, and other worthy institutions. Some have even gone so far as to give their bodies for a cause they espoused. But this thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians plainly tells us that unless we have divine love in the heart, all this will profit us nothing. Our name, our fame, our all would perish with the using. The highest education, the greatest skill in arts and learning, the best in science and modern invention could never obtain one iota of divine love for any person. It is God's free gift, purchased by the Blood of His Son, Jesus, and can be obtained by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Characteristics of Love

Paul analysed love, broke it down into its component parts, and told us what it really is. Love is kind and suffereth long. The love of God in one's heart causes him to abide by a law of kindness. It means that he is not only gentle and long-suffering, but he is true to souls who are untrue to themselves. Many people are untrue to themselves, and they try to cover up this untruth in their own heart. They need someone who is kind and wise to help them uncover the thing that is eventually going to make them lose their soul unless they repent of it. Kindness is a virtue, wrought out in the heart, that naturally comes out of the mouth.

One who loves does not tear down his brother. He may have to reprove and rebuke, but underneath it is the law of kindness that is right there to pour in the oil. Love is tender and compassionate in itself, and kind and obliging to others. It does not create trouble. Love makes one ever willing that others be preferred above himself. Love is not discontented at the happiness or excellence of another. It does not set itself forward, and does not desire to be noticed and applauded. Love is not hasty to pass an opinion or to correct another. It is not inflated with a sense of its own importance. True humility arises from a consciousness of the fullness of God in the soul.

Love is not provoked by people nor circumstances to act contrary to its position in life. True love prompts its possessor to do the kind and thoughtful and proper thing in every circumstance. Love seeketh not her own welfare, and is never satisfied except in the welfares, comfort, and salvation of others. It rejoices in truth alone. It beareth the infirmities and faults of others, believeth the best that is possible of every man, hopeth for the salvation and betterment of men everywhere, and endureth all trials and afflictions with confidence. No man can be truly prepared for eternal glory whose heart and soul are not deeply imbued with this divine love.

Charity

Love never faileth. Prophecies shall fail; tongues shall cease; knowledge shall vanish away; but the love of God shall abide forever. In the dark continent of Africa, where David Livingstone was the first white man to penetrate much of the interior, it is

said that when you mention his name, those dark faces will light up as they speak of the kind doctor who passed there years ago. They could not understand his language, but they felt the love that beat in his heart. If we take into our heart that simple grace of Christian love, our work will succeed. We can take nothing greater.

The Greatest of All

Now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love. "To love abundantly is to live abundantly, and to love forever is to live forever," says one minister. Hence, eternal life is bound up with love.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Faith brings us into touch with God, and by faith we walk with God. It is one of the three great things. Hope buoys the soul and keeps us pressing onward. Hope is confident expectation of things to come. Our helmet is the hope of salvation. We wear it continuously. Without hope, the soul sickens and dies. Even in darkest hours, hope will spring to our rescue. We carry faith and hope with us through this life, but we carry love throughout eternity. The greatest of these is love!

"Oh, love of God, how rich and pure!

How measureless and strong!

It shall forevermore endure ---

The saints' and angels' song."

QUESTIONS

1. What three great things are compared in this lesson?
2. Describe Faith.
3. Describe Hope.
4. Describe Charity.
5. Tell the difference between human love and divine love.
6. What does a sermon or testimony sound like without the love of God in the heart?
7. What makes one a wholehearted Christian?
8. Name some of the fruits of divine love.