

# Love Is the Greatest!

“But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.”  
I Corinthians 12:31

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”  
I Corinthians 13:13

## **Introduction:**

1. This subject will do more for you growing in favor with God and man than any other (Luke 2:52).
2. Presenting each man perfect in Christ is my goal, so this topic is paramount (Col 1:28-29; Col 3:14).
3. Elton John and Whitney Houston can sing about “love,” but they know nothing at all (I John 3:10)!
  - a. When Elton John sings about “love,” he means the perversions he commits with his sodomite buddies.
  - b. When Whitney Houston sings about “love,” she means the greatest love of all is loving yourself!
4. What is love? Of God, it is strong desire to please Him, serve Him, enjoy Him, and avoid any offence.
5. What is love? Of others, it is the selfless desire for their welfare, by Bible terms, with an eye toward heaven.
6. We are a doctrinal church committed to truth, but love is greater by a number of measures; this does not mean we compromise doctrine for love, but it does mean we emphasize love as the New Testament does.
7. We must avoid doctrine without love (the heartless knowledge Paul condemned in I Cor 13:1-3) and love without doctrine (the mindless emotion and sentiment of compromise that Jehu condemned in II Chr 19:2).

## **LOVE IS THE GREATEST DUTY**

- A. God has placed us under greater obligation to love than the other stated duties of either testament.
- B. Love of others is not a suggestion, but a plain commandment of God (I Pet 1:22; 2:17; I John 3:23).
- C. It is the first two laws, the royal law, and includes all the law (Mark 12:28-34; Jas 2:8; Gal 5:14).
- D. Our Lord taught from the beginning to love one another (I John 3:11,23; II John 1:3; Jn 15:12,17).
- E. Practical sanctification or holiness requires an increase in love of others (I Thess 3:12-13; 4:9-10).
- F. True godliness, or walking as God’s children, requires walking in love (Eph 5:1-2; Matt 5:43-48).
- G. We are clearly taught to love God, husband, wife, children, brethren, pastor, neighbor, enemy, etc.

## **LOVE IS THE GREATEST GRACE**

- A. We would not love at all were it not for the grace of God giving us a nature and teaching us to love.
- B. By nature we are very hateful creatures, living in malice and envy, and hating others (Titus 3:3).
- C. By nature we are the sons and followers of the devil, who is a murderer (Eph 2:1-3; John 8:44).
  1. A primary device of Satan is to divide and conquer through hate and envy (I John 3:11-13).
  2. Bitter envying and strife in the heart is devilish confusion and evil of hell (James 3:14-16).
  3. Our warfare is in the spiritual realm with satanic forces, not carnal foes (Ephesians 6:10-13).
  4. The flesh rebels with such animosity against this grace that it is an obvious true trait of saints.
- D. Saul hated the saints exceedingly (Acts 9:1; 26:11), but Paul loved them dearly (II Cor 12:15).
- E. Faith and knowledge are great, but they require love and destroy love (I Corinthians 8:1; 13:2).
- F. Faith, hope, and charity are wonderful graces of the Spirit, but the greatest is love (I Cor 13:13).

## **LOVE IS THE GREATEST EVIDENCE**

- A. The certain assurance of eternal life to ourselves and to others is by the degree of love we show.
- B. Faith is evidence (John 5:24; I John 5:1), but it is very weak evidence indeed (James 2:14-26).
- C. It needs to have other things added to it for it to be of any evidence (II Pet 1:5-11; I Thess 1:2-4).
- D. Faith must have love added to it to be evidence (Gal 5:6; Heb 6:10; James 2:20; I Peter 1:21-22).
- E. Election and regeneration are proved by abounding love (II Peter 1:5-11; I John 3:10-14; 4:7-12).
- F. We have no real evidence we truly love God unless we love the sons of God (I John 4:20 – 5:1).
- G. We can assure our hearts before God by practicing love as He exemplified it (I John 3:16-19).

## LOVE IS THE GREATEST MEASURE

- A. We approach perfection by God's measurement of us according to our degree of love to others.
- B. Jesus taught love as the great measure of His disciples (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35).
- C. Paul and John described love highly as the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:14; I John 4:12).
- D. Ministers are to provide an example for the believers by loving good men (Titus 2:7 cp 1:8).
- E. Paul prayed for it to increase (I Thess 4:9-10), abound (I Thess 3:12), and continue (Heb 13:1).
- F. Paul desired and commended its increase (Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:3-4; 2:2; II Thess 1:3).
- G. Many men were measured heroes by their faith and hope (Hebrews 11). But love is much greater.
  - 1. Love will emulate Jesus Christ (John 13:34 cp Eph 5:25-30) and Paul (I Thessalonians 2:7-12).
  - 2. David and Jonathan had a relationship that ought to be emulated by all (II Samuel 1:26).
- H. Coveting the best spiritual gifts is desirable, but practicing charity is superior (I Cor 12:28 – 13:13).
  - 1. Here is one of the glorious declarations about love – it is more excellent than being an apostle!
  - 2. Without it, the best use of the best spiritual gifts imaginable is utterly and totally worthless.
  - 3. The spiritual gifts that Corinth craved and abused were to end, but charity was to live on!
- I. True love must be unfeigned and without dissimulation (Romans 12:9; II Cor 6:6; Prov 26:24-26).
- J. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven are those who love and serve others (Matthew 20:25-28).

## LOVE IS THE GREATEST MEANS

- A. We may accomplish more good for God's glory and Christ's kingdom with love than anything else.
- A. Churches grow internally through edification of themselves and truth in love (Eph 4:15-16).
- B. Everything we do is to be done with charity, or it is of no value or effect (I Corinthians 16:14).
- C. Love can cover a multitude of sins by (1) ignoring them or (2) correcting them (I Peter 4:8).
- D. Love causes others to rejoice as they see your charity (Philemon 1:7; II John 1:4; III John 1:3-6).

## LOVE IS THE GREATEST SOURCE

- B. We may secure more benefits and live more prosperously by love than by any other means.
- C. Love in action is the means to loving life and seeing good days from the Lord (I Peter 3:8-11).
- D. An environment of love is able to make meager fare superior to great riches (Proverbs 15:17).
- E. Love is the bond of perfectness, which means it can unite better than anything else (Col 3:14).
- F. Hatred thinks evil of others and foolishly surmises wicked motives when there are none there.
- G. Love always thinks the best, believes the best, and hopes the best for a peaceful and quiet life.

## LOVE IS THE GREATEST CONCEPT

- A. Love is more than a feeling – it keeps God's commandments toward others (I Jn 5:2-3; II Jn 1:6).
  - 1. This doctrine assumes that God's commandments are the best possible way to treat others.
  - 2. The golden rule – doing to others, as you would have them do to you – is love (Matthew 7:12).
  - 3. Loving God and loving neighbor fulfill the entire law of God (Matt 22:37-40; Rom 13:8-10).
  - 4. If I love a man, I will not kill him, steal from him, commit adultery with his wife, etc., etc.
- B. Love is the rebuking and correcting of sin in other men (Lev 19:17; Phil 1:9-11; Rev 3:19).
  - 1. Since you have their best interests at heart, you will correct them (Proverbs 9:8; 27:5; 28:23).
  - 2. How does a parent show love to a child? By correcting any errors (Pr 13:24; 3:12; Heb 12:6-8).
  - 3. Though smiting is an act of kindness and love, love is much more than that (Psalm 141:5).
- C. However, love also includes the bowels of compassion in God's elect (Colossians 3:12-15).
  - 1. **Bowels.** Transferred sense. Considered as the seat of the tender and sympathetic emotions, hence: pity, compassion, feeling, 'heart.' Consider Genesis 43:30; I Kings 3:26; Song of Solomon 5:4; Jeremiah 4:19; 31:20; Lamentations 1:20; 2:11; and I John 3:17.
  - 2. This aspect of love is distinguished from coming with a rod in judgment (I Corinthians 4:21).

3. See one mind, compassion, pity, courtesy, blessing for railing, and peace (I Peter 3:8-11).
  4. Love is kind affection preferring others before yourself (Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:1-4).
  5. Love is lowly, kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of others as is God (Eph 4:1-3,31-32).
  6. Love will sacrifice personal liberty for another (Rom 14:15; I Corinthians 8:1,13; 10:33).
  7. Love covers transgressions and forgives them repeatedly (Prov 17:9; I Pet 4:8; Matt 18:21-22).
- D. Love is ... sacrificial desire resulting in action to help another realize God's best for his life.
1. Love is ... sacrificial. It considers others more important than one's self and so gives up self.
  2. Love is ... desire. Love involves feelings and passion. Do not totally value letter over spirit.
  3. Love is ... action. Love that is felt, believed, or professed is worthless. It must cause action.
  4. Love is ... help. It will recognize its role in adding others and avoid the precious opportunity.
  5. Love is ... another. Love is not self-centered, but other-centered. Love looks away from self.
  6. Love is ... God's best. It knows that God's will and pleasure is the supreme goal for all men.
  7. Love is ... his life. It seeks the best for another's life, here and later, even at self's expense.
- E. Paul summarized the true definition of love in a 15-part glorious sentence in I Corinthians 13:4-7.
1. Love suffers long. It will tolerate many offences and still love on (Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; 19:11).
  2. Love is kind. It considers others in a gentle, sympathetic, or benevolent way (Proverbs 19:22).
  3. Love does not envy. It does not harbor evil feelings because of advantage (Proverbs 27:4).
  4. Love does not vaunt itself. It seeks rather to emphasize others (Proverbs 13:10; Phil 2:1-4).
  5. Love is not puffed up. It does not think more highly of self than right (I Cor 4:6; 5:2; 8:1).
  6. Love does not behave itself unseemly. It behaves in a becoming way (Phil 4:8; Col 3:19).
  7. Love seeks not her own. It will sacrifice self for others (I Cor 10:24,33; Rom 15:2; Eph 5:25).
  8. Love is not easily provoked. It will tolerate a lot before responding (James 1:19; Prov 14:17).
  9. Love thinks no evil. It will not allow suspicion, but rather believe the best (I Tim 6:4).
  10. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. It is grieved to see others sin (Lev 19:17-18; Ps 119:136).
  11. Love rejoices in the truth. It is glad when its object is in the truth (III John 1:3-4; James 3:17).
  12. Love bears all things. It is willing to help others as much as possible (Rom 15:1-2; Gal 6:2).
  13. Love believeth all things. It always places the best construction on others (I Corinthians 11:18).
  14. Love hopeth all things. Even when the evidence is mounting, it will hope good (Philemon 1:21).
  15. Love endureth all things. It is not affected or provoked by evil from others (I Corinthians 13:4).

### **LOVE IS THE GREATEST WORK**

- A. We must work harder to learn to love and actually do it than the effort for anything else.
- B. Love, like many of God's commandments, must be done without regard to your feelings.
- C. Even the bowels of compassion we are to have for others is to be put on (Colossians 3:12-14).
- D. Love is more than a thought or word. It must be action (I Jn 3:18; I Thes 1:3; Heb 6:10; Jas 15-16).

### **LOVE IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE**

- A. We face a great task against the flesh, the world, and the devil to learn how to love properly.
- B. You can love as God requires, because God has given His Spirit of love (II Timothy 1:7; Gal 5:22).
- C. God can put the earnest care for others in your heart, as He did for Titus (II Corinthians 8:16).
  1. Pray for greater love. Faith comes by hearing, but the disciples prayed for it (Luke 17:5).
  2. While you pray for love, make every effort to practice it yourself. God will enable you.
- D. You can seek love or increase your love by learning to cover transgressions (Prov 17:9; 10:12).
- E. Practicing Christian hospitality is a direct way of showing more love (Romans 12:13; I Peter 4:9).
- F. God by His Spirit and through Christ has given us the ability to love (II Timothy 1:7; Phil 4:13).
- G. The uncomely and unfriendly will require greater initiative and patient (II Corinthians 12:15).
- H. True love will be open to measurement by others (Philemon 1:7; Ephesians 1:15; II Cor 8:24).
- I. We should provoke each other to love and good works by example and instruction (Heb 10:24).

**Conclusion:**

1. For those who truly want to grow in grace, rather than studying to see if you can discover a new doctrine or get prepared to confound seminarians, try learning to forbear, forgive, and serve others like Jesus and Paul.
2. Do something for a personal “enemy” today. Pray for them. Give them a gift. Praise them in public. Do it!

**For Further Study:**

1. The sermon outline, “[The Definition of Love](#),” provides a careful explanation for each term in I Corinthians 13:4-7.
2. The sermon outline, “[The Lie of Self-Love](#),” condemns and refutes the modern narcissistic obsession with self-esteem.
3. The sermon outline, “[The Lie of Unconditional Love](#),” deals with the modern psycho-babble idea of baseless love.
4. The sermon outline, “[Brotherly Love](#),” is a simple review of the importance of loving and serving one another.
5. The sermon outline, “[Bowels of Compassion](#),” deals with the Bible view of bowels, compassion, and empathy.
6. The sermon outline, “[Why Wear Pretty Shoes?](#)” covers the Bible command to love the uncomely members in a church.