



THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

INTRODUCTION

And now abides faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is love... Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3)

This is classic enduring Christianity and Christian living. Individual churches may pass away; prophecies, tongues, and knowledge may pass away. But our human religious needs remain the same and the gospel of God in Christ remains the same. Faith, hope, and love are realities that never change. They are qualities that distinguish the Christian man and woman. They are the dimensions of Christian living, the secrets of true greatness.

THE DIMENSION OF LOVE.

Love means taking seriously the basic affirmation that all who love God are my brothers and are not to be put in the background even though they come shabbily dressed (James 2:14). Love is the work of faith (James 2:14ff).

Love is a word that has been tarnished with use and abuse. It can mean anything "from Hollywood to Heaven" from crude lust, through noble, human affection, to the gracious love of God shown to us in Christ. Christian love is love at its highest and best. It is agape, a new noun coined for a new thing, a new way of living and loving brought into the world by Jesus Christ. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom.5:5). It is caring, because God has so cared for us in Jesus. It is an endless adventure in caring, losing oneself in service for others, discovering the thrill of self-denial and sacrifice. This love enlarges life beyond our wildest dreams, liberating us from our dark ego.

Christian love, whether exercised toward fellow believers or toward others generally is not an impulse from our feelings; it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor is it expressed only upon those we like. Love seeks the welfare of all (Rom. 15:2). Love does no harm to anyone (Rom. 13:8-10). Love seeks opportunity to do good to all men and especially toward them that are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

We live in a world where people live by their feeling and their thinking. When people talk how many times do they say "I feel...." or "I think....". Scriptures never focus on feelings or thinking, but always on FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE. We need to get out of the surface, mentality and into three-dimensional Christian living: having, expressing, and living by faith, hope, and love. This life-style will cause us to "feel" right, "think" right, and live right.

According to 1 Corinthians 13:13, the three dimensions of Christian living are Faith, Hope, and Love.

FAITH is the dimension that reaches upward and claims the POWER of God.

HOPE is the dimension that reaches forward and claims the PURPOSE of God.

LOVE is the dimension that reaches outward and claims the PEOPLE of God.

Faith works by LOVE.

Though I have faith to remove all mountains (miracles) and have not love,

I am nothing.

Though I give my body to be burned (martyrdom) and have not love,

I am nothing.

Though I give all my goods to the poor (poverty), and have not love,

I am nothing...

And now abides (endures now and forever)

FAITH (loyalty to God)

HOPE (expectation of fulfillment of His promises)

LOVE

The greatest of these is LOVE!