

The Love Of God

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the sky of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Tho stretched from sky to sky.
O Love of God, how rich and pure,
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

F. M. Lehman

Spring

the **SWORD** 2008

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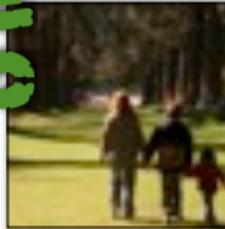


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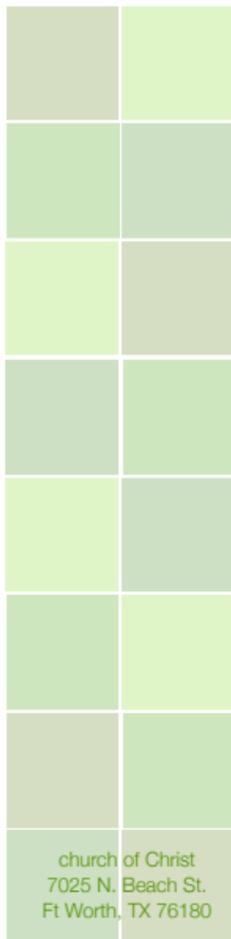
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towards us. We cannot control the actions of others toward us and it is difficult to love a person who hates us or curses us. So, how do you show love to another person who is hard to love? According to Matthew, there are three ways we can show an active love toward those who are even our enemies: 1) bless them, 2) do good to them, and 3) pray for them.

We "bless" someone when we don't say evil things about them and only speak good things when we talk about them. Even though we may not like a person, the blessing is to find something nice to say about them or remember something they did that was good and promote that good. If we can't find something good to say, then it is best to say nothing at all. When we bless others, we speak well of them.

Speaking well of someone is a starting point, but active love also means that we must "do good" toward them as well. We sing the song "Room in the Kingdom" with the phrase, "a small kindly deed that will cheer another..." indicating we can all do small kindly deeds. Prov 25:21 states, "if your enemy is hungry, give him food and/or thirsty give him something to drink for in doing this, you will heap burning coals upon his head and the Lord will reward you." The heaping of burning coals or the blessing of the Lord should not be the driving force that directs our actions. Our heart must have the desire to

do good things for those who hate us and the result is that they will see Christ in us.

Finally, the third thing we can do is to pray for our enemies. Praying under this circumstance does two things. First, it makes us look at our heart to make sure we are not doing something that is causing the other person to hate us. We need to search our heart and check and double check our actions to see if we are the one who has sinned. Secondly, it helps us be the example and have the right attitude toward the other person, hoping that God will work in their heart. James 5:16 tells us to "pray for one another so that we may be healed and that the prayer of a righteous person can accomplish much."

To sum things up, Paul told the Philippians in Phil 1:9-10, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." He also told them in Phil 2:3-4 to "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."



Love: An Overview

Phil Lumpkin

*But now abide faith, hope, love, these three;
but the greatest of these is love.*

1 Corinthians 13:13

We've considered Faith & Hope in our first two issues; now let's turn our attention to what Paul described as the greatest of the Christian virtues – Love. Love is the crowning achievement of spiritual perfection and the chief motivational factor behind every aspect of Christian development and character.

"What the world needs now, is love, sweet love . . ." Songs with words like these warm our spirits and stir the feelings of our hearts. Songs about love stir up the incalculable joy and fulfillment of relationships, such as those between husbands & wives, parents & children, grandparents & grandchildren, family relationships of all kinds and expresses the deep connection between special friends. Love also uniquely expresses the bond between brethren in Christ. Love's ultimate expression is found in the Creator Himself and in turn, our relationship with Him. As love is the highest expression of God to mankind, so it must also be the highest expression of man's relation to his Maker and his fellow-man.

The Scriptures were written using various Greek and Hebrew words that have been translated into our English word "Love." While these convey various shades and intensities of meaning, they all revolve around the central idea of seeking the best interest of the one loved. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines love like this: "Love, whether used of God or man, is an earnest and anxious desire for and an active and beneficent interest in the well-being of the one loved." Different degrees and manifestations of this affection are recognized in the Scriptures, but in every case love is the antithesis of selfishness.

Perhaps you are familiar with the Greek verbs *agapao* and *phileo* and nouns *agape* and *philanthropia*. Various forms of these words, along with the Hebrew verb *ahab* and noun *ahabah* convey the primary ideas of love in the Scriptures. Nelson's Bible Dictionary states that *phileo* conveys the concept of "ardent affection and feeling – a type of impulsive love." *Phileo* generally carries the expectation of mutual reciprocation of that affection and feeling. In Titus 2:4, Paul exhorts the older women to "*encourage the young women to love (phileo) their husbands, to love (phileo) their children.*" Both usages of "Love" in this passage convey the ardent affection and feeling of familial love.

defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren." 1 Cor 8:11-12 "*For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ."* 1 Cor 10:24 "*Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor."* 1 Cor 11:17-20 "*I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you."* We see in these examples that Paul repeatedly dealt with their divisive tendencies, which seems to have sprung from their self interest and selfishness.

Continuing with his theme, in 12:12 after introductory comments about spiritual gifts, Paul once again addressed their selfishness, which in this case sprang from their pursuit of showy, ostentatious gifts such as speaking in tongues or prophecy. "*For even as the body is one*

and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." In verses 24-25 he said, "... God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another." The Corinthians' selfish pursuit of conspicuous gifts had become divisive. Instead of unifying them together as integral members of a larger body, their selfishness was driving them apart. In short – division where there should have been unity. It's in this disparaging context of self interest that Paul unveiled the antidote. He wrote, "*and I show you a still more excellent way,*" and launched into his expose' on love.

What the Corinthians needed perhaps more than anything was love. They had followed after Paul, Apollos or Peter, they were taking each other to court, they had broken into cliques when partaking of the Lord's Supper, and they clamored for their own self aggrandizement in the exercise of spiritual gifts. They had sown to the wind and reaped the whirlwind of division. In stark contrast to their selfish pursuits, Paul exhorted them to pursue the more excellent way.

We all stand in different places in our families, as children, brothers, sisters, parents, husbands, wives, grandparents and even great-grandparents. Each of us in our love for family looks back to fond memories, forward to bright futures, and if we are wise, to look to the present to love deeply and savor the moments, to guide little hearts that we love so dearly, to forgive quickly and to praise often. We must never fear to tell our loved ones that they are loved. If you don't do it, who will? Finally, praise the Lord for His gift of family love that blesses us daily.



Love In The Congregation

Phil Lumpkin

Earlier in this issue brother Dabney led us to consider 1 Corinthians 13 – that beautiful treatise on love. Have you ever wondered why this special chapter is located at its particular point in Scripture? As thoughtful Bible students we know that the immediate context addresses spiritual gifts in both the preceding and succeeding chapters. However, in the middle of this discussion the Holy Spirit seemingly digressed to talk about love – that quality which is greatest and abides forever.

Although the Spirit appears to have digressed, the broader context of the

letter seems to actually set the stage for his treatise. You'll recall that Paul addressed various problems and answered specific questions in the 1st Corinthian letter, and you probably also remember the first problem he addressed. In 1:10 he wrote, *"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."* Paul began with this theme and continued to cast light on the Corinthians' insidious spirit of divisiveness throughout the letter.

Observe his recurring theme in these passages scattered throughout the 1st Corinthian letter. In 1 Cor 3:3, he wrote, *"... for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?"* In 1 Cor 4:6 *"these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other."* 1 Cor 6:5-8 *"I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? Actually, then, it is already a*

Agape or Agapao conveys a slightly different concept. Thayer states that agapao denotes a love founded primarily in admiration, veneration and esteem. Where phileo is closely associated with heart-felt emotions and feelings, agape is more closely associated with the intellect, the will, the biblical heart. Agape does not depend on reciprocity. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, but the world doesn't universally return that love. In Ephesians 5:25, husbands are instructed *"to love (agapao) their wives, even as Christ loved the church."* Isn't it interesting that wives are instructed to phileo their husbands and husbands are instructed to agapao their wives?

In John 21:15-17 Jesus and Peter give us an interesting interplay between agapao and phileo that helps illustrate their respective shades of meaning.

15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agapas) Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (agapas) Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John,

do you love (phileo) Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love (phileo) Me?" And he said to Him, " Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) You. "Jesus said to him, " Tend My sheep.

Restated, Jesus twice asked, do you esteem me and hold me in high regard? And twice Peter answered, Lord you know that I have strong affection and feelings for you. Finally our Lord asked Peter if he had strong bonds of affection and sentiment for Him and Peter responded that indeed he did. Jesus was perhaps helping Peter understand the need to develop the highest, most perfect kind of love – the kind he would need when Jesus was taken captive. However, Peter hadn't matured in his relationship with Jesus far enough to agapas his Lord just yet.

Yet it is Peter who instructs us in 2 Peter 1:5-8 to develop the Christian graces which include both phileo and agapas.

"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love."

Each of these virtues is enjoined on Christians; Peter denotes, however, the hierarchical significance of love. Brotherly love (Philadelphia – derived from phileo) is the godly person's natural expression of fraternal affection toward fellow believers. Finally love (agape) is shown to be the crowning virtue of mature Christian character. When we've been diligent to add love – phileo and agapao – to our character, he then confidently states:

1. *If these are in you and increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful.*
2. *However, he who lacks these is blind or short sighted.*
3. *As long as you practice these things you will never stumble.*
4. *In this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord will be abundantly supplied to you.*



A Love To Die For Russ Ward

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would dare to die, but God commendeth his love toward us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for

us." (Romans 5:7-8) It is a powerful thought that someone would choose to die for another. We have recorded for us in history those times where individuals in a select moment and time sacrificed themselves for another. Military personnel in times of war have thrown themselves upon grenades, sheltered the innocent caught up in the flood of bullets from exchange of weapon fire, and shouldered the wounded, many times forfeiting their own lives. Police and firefighters enter into forays to save others at moments where death can be imminent, yet they do so without hesitation. Secret Service personnel without thought cover and protect leaders of our country, sacrificing themselves for others. Mothers in times of maternal instinct achieve great feats of strength and fortitude to protect their own children. Even ordinary people have been known to act without thought of self preservation to save a child facing a life threatening situation even when they know nothing about the child. We could continue on with example after example of instances where one human being readily offers their life in service or in exchange for another. Have you ever asked yourself why?

We could quickly point out that with Military, Police, Firemen, Secret Service, etc. all are trained to react to the present danger. In truth their reactions are a

Christians welcome the blessings and the responsibilities of this relationship, striving to use our love to guide every family member toward a journey to Heaven.

Scripture guides us in our attempts to love our families as we should. Stories of families abound throughout the Bible, giving us honest accounts of successes and failures among God's people.

Jacob loved Rachel with all of his heart serving seven years for her *"and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her."* (Gen. 29:20)

Childless Hannah prayed fervently for a child, receiving a son whom she *"lent to the Lord"* (1 Sam. 1:28) for his lifetime as an offering of thanksgiving to God and love for Samuel.

Joseph *"kissed all his brothers and wept over them"* (Gen. 45:15) forgiving them for the cruelty that they had inflicted upon him, which had deprived him of a family.

In one of the most touching scenes described in scripture, the Lord Jesus dying in agony on the cross, gently provided for his mother's future. Mary stood at the cross with the apostle John, where Jesus, looking down upon them, blessed them with these words: *"behold your son"* and *"behold your mother"* (Jn. 19:26-27).

Ruth showed her love for Naomi, her mother-in-law, in the beautiful narrative of Ruth 1:16-17.

In showing family members at their worst, the Scriptures guide us away from such destructive behavior.

Cain killed his brother Abel, jealousy led to murder. (Gen. 4)

Isaac and Rebekah played favorites, leading to strife and deception between Jacob and Esau. (Gen. 25, Gen. 27)

Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers, jealousy led to cruelty and deceit and years of pain for their father. (Gen. 37)

Besides these examples and several others, the Bible graces us with many passages of wise counsel to guide us in dealing with our family members.

"He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." (Prov. 18:22)

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6)

"A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother." (Prov. 10:1)

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Prov. 15:1)

"Correct your son and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul." (Prov. 29:17)

3:22-24; 5:1-4; 2 John 4-6; 3 John 3-4). Obedience is a choice. We either choose to obey God's will or choose not to submit to His commandments (1 John 2:3-4).

John assures us that God's "commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Too, John reminds us that, "if we keep his commandments" we can and will know God (1 John 2:3). The word "keep" is translated from a word meaning "to give heed to, as in keeping or obeying commandments." The word is in the present tense (the tense of continuous activity) which suggests a pattern of life (1 John 2:6; 2 John 4-6; 3 John 3-4).

When we choose to keep or obey God's commandments, we will enjoy:

- (a.) A knowledge of and relationship with God (1 John 2:3, 5)
- (b.) The love of God being perfected in us (1 John 2:5),
- (c.) The gift of eternal life (1 John 2:15-17; John 8:51),
- (d.) The joy of being a child of God (1 John 5:1-4; 3:1-3),
- (e.) The assurance of answered prayers (1 John 3:21-23; 5:14-15), and
- (f.) The gift of the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13; Acts 2:36-38; 5:32).

**Loving God is
keeping His commandments
(1 John 5:2).**



Love In The Family

Ron Gray

One of the greatest gifts that God gives to us is His boundless love. "For God so loved the world that he gave..." (Jn. 3:16) He gave His son as a precious sacrifice and continues to send a mighty river of blessings flowing down from Heaven. He gave all blessings from the simple sunrise waking us, warming us, ushering out the night, to the glorious promise of salvation from sin and death and a home in Heaven eternal. Not only have we been blessed with the love of God, but because He saw fit to "make man in our image, according to our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26), we are granted by Him the capacity and the responsibility to love others in a limited way as He loves us.

God allows each of us to enter a spectrum of love that is a real blessing on earth. This love develops throughout our lifetime growing deeper and wider with each passing day. This is family love, one member to another, spread throughout generations, the bond that creates a lifetime of blessings. We willingly give ourselves to loving, honoring, respecting, and protecting those whom the Lord has lovingly placed within our families.

product of continual training so that there is no hesitation when action is called into place. Possibly they react simply out of duty but doesn't duty stem from some deeper underlying thought process? Regarding mothers, do they simply reflect a natural protection that even many animals portray? Is this truly nothing more than a natural phenomenon? How do we explain the reaction of everyday people, who when the situation demands, bring from within the ability to act or react without thought or concern of their own lives for the benefit of another?

I would put forth two reasons to consider. First we are wonderfully made and fashioned after Jehovah God our creator and secondly because it is a learned trait of our Lord Jesus Christ both of which can be attributed toward an expression of love. God has placed within man a sense of protection, care, and concern for the innocent, weak, and afflicted. It is what defines us and sets us apart from the rest of creation. It is that innate portion of our lives which irrevocably confirms that there is a God. Consider also how Christ as part of the God-head, who from the beginning of time knew that he would one day empty himself of his place with God and allow himself to become a man upon the earth to suffer death not for himself but for all mankind. What is intriguing with Christ's

sacrifice is simply this, that his was not one of reaction to a present danger, rather it was a planned and thought out process for the redemption of mankind. It is through this very action that Jesus personified true love. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:12-13



This Highest Love

Dick Dabney

The apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit give us timeless wisdom for our understanding of love when Paul writes his interlude in 1st Corinthians chapter 13. As he admonishes the first-century Christians to have proper regard for their miraculous gifts of prophecy and special knowledge and unlearned languages ("tongues"), Paul says at the end of chapter 12, "And I show you a more excellent way," at which he turns his focus to "love" as we see in the following chapter 13.

We have previously seen descriptions of the different kinds of love conveyed in the Greek language of scripture, and understand that Paul writes here of the kind of love represented in the word "agape." To help us focus on Paul's

intended meaning, this article will refer to the agape image as "This Highest Love." Perhaps that will help us avoid the distraction of foreign terms.

Paul writes a beautiful litany in verses four through seven of chapter 13. This section of scripture is often recited in weddings to have us reminded of the high standards on which a proper marriage should be based. Even more than that, these benchmark qualities are the goals for each of us – married or single, man or woman – as we grow before God in our relationship to each other. Paul's descriptions of This Highest Love are oriented to our fellow man rather than toward God, perhaps because of the childish disputes evident among the Corinthian Christians. As we grow to embody these qualities, we conform ourselves to the spiritual character to which God calls us.

1st Corinthians 13:4-7

This Highest Love is Patient. This notion of patience is opposed to hasty and quick irritability. This implies long-suffering endurance when you are provoked or oppressed.

An immediate passionate outburst of disagreement – "Oh, yeah?!" – is an exaggeration that illustrates the wrong image. But so is the silent stewing that simmers below the surface, even if held in check. While it will be necessary for valid

disputes to be addressed, that can occur in a way that preserves peace and dignity. The patience of This Highest Love will avoid the anger that serves more to divide people than to bring them together.

This Highest Love is Kind. Paul says to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:31-32), "*Put away all bitterness and wrath and anger ... and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving ...*" Hatred prompts a person to be harsh and severe, to seek revenge, but the kindness of This Highest Love wants peace and calm for the other person. A kind intent wants what's beneficial for those around you, and bitter disagreements among men are put away.

This Highest Love is Not Jealous. Companion interpretations say that This Highest Love "does not envy." The word for envy or jealousy concerns how a person might be zealous for or against some person or thing. Paul uses the same word at the end of chapter 12 and the beginning of chapter 14 to indicate that it would be good to be zealous/jealous for certain things. But in describing This Highest Love, he obviously means jealousy in a negative way. This Highest Love does not have a zeal that seeks to take away or undo some benefit that you see in another person. By contrast, rather than wishing the other person didn't have the good thing, you would be able to feel good for them because of it.

This is what love is all about, to give of yourself in every way you can, and when you can.

Without love in your life, you can not be normal. You can not be a healthy, happy, well adjusted human being. A person without love would dry up in their mind, health, and soul, and die of unhappiness.

Truly, the loneliest place in the world is a person's heart, void of love. You can not be a Christian without love. (1 John 3:10-16). Brotherly love is not optional; it is mandatory (1 John 4:21), "*And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.*" (See 1 John 3:23; John 13:34-35; 15:12; Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 2:17.)

Love is more important than anything we do, because love "motivates" us to do what we are commanded to do (1 John 5:3), "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*"

Obedience is the true test of love (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24; compare 1 John 2:3; 2 John 6). We are to give God our complete obedience (1 John 2:3-5; 3:22-23; 5:3). John states, "*By this we know that we are in Him*" (1 John 2:5).

Obedience is a learned behavior (Hebrews 5:8) every Christian must resolve to develop (Psalm 119:8, 69) and practice it (Hebrews 11:8).

Total obedience is essential to the reception of eternal life (1 John 2:3-5; 5:2-3; Mt. 7:21-23). We can be certain of our eternal destiny if we continue to believe and obey the will of our Lord (1 John 5:1, 13).

John suggests that we can be certain of our eternal destiny if we continue to believe and obey the will of our Lord (1 John 5:1, 13). Our eternal future is certain if we keep the commandments of God (1 John 5:2-5; 2:3-5).

Let us understand and remember our responsibility to obey God's word (1 John 2:3-5; 5:2-3; 2 John 6). Solomon, following his experiments in life, concluded that man's total purpose was to "*Fear God and keep His commandments*" (Eccl. 12:13). We, indeed, are challenged: "*Keep His commandments*" (1 John 2:3-5; 5:2), and, "*walk according to His commandments*" (2 John 6). We must know that our obedience must come from the heart; that is, it must be sincere (Rom. 6:16-18). However, we must forever be on our guard, because the devil is working diligently to hinder our obedience (Gal. 3:1; 5:7). Therefore, let us resolve to keep God's commandments (Psa. 119:115), and declare our love of God and Jesus through our obedience (John 14:15-24; 15:10).

Obeying the truth is the proper response to the truth (1 John 2:3-6;

Now we must fill in the blanks for ourselves: For I so love God that I _____. For I so love my neighbor that I _____. Unlike the "love" represented by Hollywood or on the radio, this love comes with action. These blanks must be filled in with actions, lest we do not fulfill the greatest commandments of all: to love God and our neighbor.

Make a list. What have you done in the past few days to demonstrate your love to God? How about to your neighbor?

Make a new list. What is something that you can do when you finish reading this to demonstrate your love to God? How about a prayer? What about your neighbor? How about a call? Two simple things to get us on the right track. Set this paper down and do those two things.



Keeping His Commands

John Ledbetter

Have you ever been in love? When you fall in love a funny thing happens; you want to give and give without ever stopping or receiving anything.

This is not a strange thing at all, it is perfectly normal for everyone. With love comes responsibility to the one you love. You want to do all you can and help in every way you can.

A husband provides for his wife, the wife makes a happy home for her husband. This is accomplished by giving, and giving without ever stopping, and never wanting to receive anything. Likewise, children that love their parents, brothers, sisters, and grandparents will do all in their power to give, and give, and give, without ever stopping.

Love will give us strength to give of ourselves beyond what our normal strength can do. We will be tireless, and work and work and never want to stop working to accomplish what is needed for our loved ones.

Love gives us courage that we thought we never had. "Love casts out all fear" (1 John 4:18). We will risk our life to save a loved one from dangers that may befall them. Fathers have gone into burning buildings to rescue their wives and children. Mothers have gone through fire and danger to rescue their children.

I heard of a father who was driving through "Animal Kingdom" and when going by the lion area his five year old daughter was pulled from the window of the car by a lion.

Without a second's hesitation, he jumped out of the car and attacked the 400 pound lion. He stunned the lion by hitting it on the nose with his fist, then ran with his daughter back to the car before the girl was hurt.

This Highest Love Does Not Brag.

When you have your interest on the value and benefit of the other person, you will not be attracted to seize the spotlight for yourself. This Highest Love supposes the virtue of the other person above yourself, as Paul instructed the Christians in Italy (Rom. 12:10) to prefer one another (ahead of yourself). A well-grown child of God will be confident in his own standing before God so that he won't need the shallow regard of men.

This Highest Love is Not Arrogant.

The early teachings of Jesus touched on the tendency of arrogant men to seek the best positions for themselves (Luke 14:7-11). The Lord said the one "who exalts himself shall be humbled." This Highest Love focuses on the feelings and value of the other person, not on personal glory. A humble attitude is foundational for God's children.

This Highest Love Does Not Act Unbecomingly.

Conduct that is "becoming" is decent, proper and accepted by right-thinking people. It might be described as polite. Unbecoming behavior would be unseemly and offensive, rude or perhaps indecent. A child of God led by This Highest Love will recognize the foolishness of behavior that makes others not want to be around him. The opportunity to be of glory to God hinges on behavior that encourages

others to accept your conduct and influence.

This Highest Love Does Not Seek Its Own.

Our innate nature will lead us to tend to our own well being – our health and happiness and stability – simply as a condition of life. What's further described in This Highest Love is a viewpoint that so cares for others that their interests are not sacrificed for your own. This Highest Love does not advance its own happiness at the expense of the other person. It is an expression of selfless consideration of the needs of the other person. This is the attitude that might forego a Saturday at the park in order to help another person overcome some difficulty in their life – you would spend your time and money for their benefit instead of insisting that you have the pleasure of leisurely relaxation.

This Highest Love is Not Provoked.

Like the notion of jealousy, this becoming "provoked" can be for good or for bad. It conveys an idea of energetic passion and excitement. And when those emotions are directed improperly, excited reactions feed disputes and disagreements, and hard feelings. The Christian guided by This Highest Love will look soberly at aggravating or insulting encounters and will refuse to be drawn to an impulsive response. With patient composure, applying tolerance, he will govern his passions for a calm and considered reply,

befitting one who is not seeking his own esteem.

This Highest Love Does Not Take into Account a Wrong Suffered. When a person feels affronted, whether by insult, property damage or physical harm, a first inclination often is an indelible mental note of who caused the pain, and what imagined answer would be appropriate when the opportunity arises – how to even the score. In contrast, This Highest Love seeks to put the best possible interpretation on the circumstance, wanting to find that the harm was not intentional, perhaps even regretted by the other person as a mistake that would be taken back if possible. This Highest Love seeks to not impute improper motives to others, is not disposed to find fault, and is not interested in keeping score either for future reprisal or for unspoken criticism.

This Highest Love Does Not Rejoice in Unrighteousness, But Rejoices With Truth. Paul contrasts these matters of unrighteousness and truth also in Rom. 2:8 and in 2Thes. 2:12. For the Christian led by This Highest Love, it would not be acceptable in any way to find joy or entertainment in things of unrighteousness, commonly called sin. Such an idea would disagree from the start with the Lord's call to come out of the life of sin into the salvation of Jesus Christ. Neither does This Highest Love

find joy in the difficulties encountered by those living in unrighteousness, but would have sadness for the control of Satan that prevails in the lives of so many. The positive focus instead is on the joy of things that are right and pure and of high virtue, and the future represented there in the victory of God and Jesus.

This Highest Love Bears All Things, Believes All Things, Hopes All Things, Endures All Things. A Christian led by This Highest Love will be prepared to be a bedrock of integrity among the shifting sands of superficial mankind. The idea of "bearing" things connotes a covering, so to keep from being unfortunately revealed. So where there are matters that morally or ethically should be held in confidence, he will be reliable to hold such things secure. He will seek to believe the best of matters brought to his attention, wanting the outcome to reflect as favorably as possible in every direction. He will hope fervently alongside those who have come to him for support, and will commit his effort in every possible way to work toward the hoped-for result. Where he is under assault by the inequities of men, he will endure and maintain his composure, without lashing out or crying foul. He will carry on in the strength of the Lord, as he knows the final outcome will have him vindicated, forever in the light of the glory of God.

The Greatest Commands

David Henderson

Some in times past have been led to think that there is no grace in the Old Testament and that there is no Law in the New Testament. Both concepts are wrong and can lead to great misunderstandings of what God had in mind for us in His Scriptures. The New Testament, in fact, grants us the "greatest commandments" of all in Matthew 22:36-40:

"One of them, a lawyer, asked Him (a question) testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and will all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment."

The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Straight from the mouth of Jesus Christ we have the greatest commandments. Some might wonder at His choice of commandments. Love God and our neighbor. Why these two?

We must understand that these two commands encompass the entirety of the Ten Commandments, the whole of the Law of Moses, and the totality of what the

prophets foretold about the future Remnant. The Ten Commandments, for instance, can be outlined like this:

- 1) No other gods before Me
- 2) No graven images
- 3) Do not use the Lord's name in vain
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy

5) Honor your father and mother

6) You shall not murder

7) You shall not commit adultery

8) You shall not steal

9) You shall not bear false witness

10) You shall not covet

You Shall Love The Lord Your God With All Your Heart, And With All Your Soul, And With All Your Mind

You Shall Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

Automatically--without knowing Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic--we see that the love that Christ speaks of implies action. We recall God's love toward us that implies the same idea: "For God so loved the world, that He gave..."