

Love Continues Forever

Key Verse: “*Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*”
—*I Corinthians 13:13, Revised Version*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 13:1-13

OUR LESSONS THIS MONTH

on the topic of love have instructed us concerning love of our brethren, love for our enemies, and love towards our neighbors—in other words, love for all of mankind. Today’s lesson points out to us that divine love, and the manifestation of it by all of God’s intelligent creation, will continue forever.

Our prior consideration of the love David and Jonathan shared as brethren showed it to be a “brotherly love” of trust and friendship which they reciprocated each to the other. When Jesus spoke of loving our enemies and our neighbors, he expressed an even higher form of love, one that is completely selfless, and is given with no thought of receiving something in return. It is this type of unselfish and unreserved love which is the basis of God’s dealings toward the human family, and which is the kind of love spoken of in our lesson. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” to be man’s Redeemer.—John 3:16,17; I Cor. 15:21,22; I Tim. 2:3-6; I John 2:1,2

Jesus, during his earthly ministry, had preached a coming kingdom, and he performed miracles as a foregleam of that wonderful time. These were also evidences of the great love which he and the Heavenly Father had, and which were embodied in their plan for the recovery of the groaning human creation. Later, various ones in the Early Church

were given miraculous powers to accompany the Apostles' preaching of Jesus Christ showing evidence of God's authority in the spreading of the Gospel message. Paul's discussion of these gifts is found in I Corinthians 12:1-11. The apostle stressed that these gifts of the spirit were given to certain individuals for the edifying of the entire church. He further pointed out that, regardless of the possession of gifts by some, each member of the "body of Christ" is of equal importance in God's sight.—vss. 12-27

While these spiritual gifts conferred upon some in the Early Church were important relative to its establishment, Paul makes it clear in today's lesson that they would expire once their purpose had been fulfilled. (I Cor. 13:8) They would be superseded by "a more excellent way." (I Cor. 12:31) The "more excellent way" is the pathway in which the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit are developed by each footstep follower of Christ. The apostle mentions three of these qualities in our Key Verse—faith, hope, and love. During this Gospel Age "these three" are to be cultivated as the fruitage of a character which has been guided and developed by God's Holy Spirit.

"Faith" which Paul mentions is faith in God, faith in the precious blood of Jesus, and faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, the Creator of all things. Such faith is attained through experience, study, and by "rightly dividing the word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15

"Hope" might be thought of as the result of a strong faith, well anchored in the promises of God. Paul urges us to "lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—Heb. 6:18,19

"Love" is "the greatest of these," Paul says. While faith and hope are vital in our development as New Creatures, faith will give way to sight, and hope will become reality. Love, however, will continue forever, for "God is love," and abideth "from everlasting to everlasting."—I John 4:8; Ps. 90:2