

## A9 BIBLE STUDY: I Corinthians 13

Scripture of Lesson: I Corinthians 13: 1-13

In the previous chapter apostle Paul wrote about God's gifts to Christians. In the last verse, v. 12:31, Paul encouraged them to "earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way," thus leading to the presentation of 'charity/ love' as the greatest gift to covet from the Lord.

In verse 13 Paul lists faith, hope and love as essential qualities in a Christian life, of which love is the greatest. He sees these qualities as fruits of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, where they are not very apparent when we are immature in faith but will grow to be mature and be so evident as if seeing face to face [v. 12], when we reach the full maturity of Christ;

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. [Eph. 4:11-13]*

According to Paul, love of Christ that grows in us is more excellent and lasting than speaking in tongues and angelic speech, a gift of prophesy to know all mysteries of God's truth and knowledge, or faith to move mountains, or willingness to sacrifice entire possessions for charity [v. 2-3]. This comparison shows the utmost value he places on love.

This love Paul writes about is the 'agape' love -- not what is meant by charity in our common use of the word, which most people understand as alms-giving, but "love in its fullest and most extensive meaning, true love to God and man, a benevolent disposition of mind towards our fellow-Christians, growing out of sincere and fervent devotion to God" [Matthew Henry commentary]. To Paul Jesus Christ demonstrated this love to him and to all sinners;

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. [Gal. 2:20]*

So, the love Paul speaks of in Chapter 13 is the love that was in Jesus and was demonstrated through His life and death. It is the love that moved Jesus to lay down His life for humanity.

In verses 4-8 Paul lists the characteristics of love of Christ in us. For each of these traits, let us consider one or more situations in Jesus' life when He displayed such a character and how His example might be applied to our life today:

- Love suffers long and is kind;
- Love does not envy;
- Love does not parade itself,
- Is not puffed up;
- Does not behave rudely,
- Does not seek its own,
- Is not provoked, thinks no evil;

- Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
- Bears all things,
- Believes all things,
- Hopes all things,
- Endures all things.
- Love never fails

What the Mosaic Law could not achieve in the hearts of people, the love of God in Jesus has fulfilled and was fully demonstrated through Him. As we begin the new year of 2017, may we embrace the love of Christ fully into our hearts and lives so that His love lives as a dominant agent in all our thoughts, meditations, plans and actions so that God is glorified through Jesus Christ! Amen.