

LESSON 10

**EXCEPT YE HAVE LOVE**

Scripture Texts: *1 Corinthians 13:3; Matthew 22:37-40; John 13:34-35, 17:26; 1 John 4:7-8,18; Galatians 5:6-14; Romans 5:5; Jude 21*

The word *love* is used very loosely by the world. In this lesson we will study together what this is that God calls the highest virtue, the very essence of God Himself. Is it more than attraction? Or is it care for? Does it desire the good of itself or of another? Is it given according as the receiver deserves it? Is God's love for us dependent upon what we are or upon what He is? He is no respecter of persons. He loved us and sent Christ to die while we were yet sinners. His love working in us will give us love for even the least lovely. They are the ones who need it most. His love will not promote love of self but will cause us to love others.

MEMORY VERSE: *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*

1 John 4:8

Love Is Necessary

The virtue of love is necessary for acceptance with God. It must be more than natural, human love. It must be the love of God received through the new birth and Holy Spirit baptism. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:3, told us that no ability, no works, or no virtue can take the place of love. No sacrifice can make up for lack of love. Love is an absolute essential of salvation, of spiritual life. Without it we are nothing, lost, and doomed for eternity. In Matthew 22:37-40 we see that to love is the great commandment of God. Therefore we cannot please Him without love. All of His rules and promises—the Law and the prophets—depend upon love. They can be accepted and obeyed as God desires only through love. We are to love God first and our neighbor second. That is, our fellow man wherever found. We cannot love our neighbor rightly until we love God most.

The only way we can love God is with our whole heart, soul, and mind. Every faculty is to be turned toward exalting Him, is to be spent in adoration of Him. His will must be our first pleasure. Love breeds joyful service. What is to measure love for our neighbor? Love for self. Everyone has a built-in measuring rod of self-love—and the further from God we are, the longer it grows. Love for self leads to a great number of other sins (2 Timothy 3:2). When one's self-love is set right, love for others will also be right.

The love binding saints together is the mark by which the world recognizes the true church, as we read in John 13:34-35. Mere professors cannot pass the love test.

The Love Test

Has man the capacity to love as commanded? No, unsaved people do not because they cannot. There is a human love that people have naturally, but it is limited. Jesus asked His Father to give His people the love that He gave Him. This marvelous love fills the heart of a saint, as we read in John 17:26. The actual love of God cannot be imitated.

In 1 John 4:7-8 we find that God is love and love is of God. It takes more than human love to qualify one as born of God. Jesus said even publicans love those who love them (Matthew 5:46). We must love with the love of God.

Human love has neither the quality nor the quantity to fill our need. We are told to love. We try, and we fail. Because to love, we must be born of God, must have Him who is love. ". . . he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God . . ." (1 John 4:16). When we have love we can use love, but we cannot manufacture love.

The Working of Love

In 1 John 4:18 we read that perfect love "casteth out fear." Love comes in when one is freed from sin and born again, and it increases toward perfection as one grows in Christ. Peace reigns. Fear is cast out of the heart. Does this mean nothing can frighten us?

There are two kinds of fear.

- (1) Inward fear that abides, constantly, in the heart. Love casts this fear out.
- (2) Outward fear caused by a frightening circumstance. This fear will be lessened by the trust in God that love brings. One may still be frightened by a fierce dog or a violent storm. Such fear passes.

Galatians 5:6 tells us that outward forms do not increase our spirituality nor gain favor with God. He looks on the heart. He seeks faith, which works by love. Love nourishes faith, activates it, and opens the way for faith to work. Galatians 5:14 lets us know that all the Law is fulfilled in one word—love. How can one sin in any way against one he loves? When the love of God fills one's heart, it nourishes all other forms of righteousness. Love is composed of honesty, of purity, of reverence, of faithfulness, etc. The love of God is not given to certain chosen ones only. It was at one time, but now, thank God, it is for whosoever will. God's love flows out upon all. He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, alike.

Finding and Keeping Love

In Romans 5:5 we find that the love of God is not ours naturally. It must be an operation of God. One first repents and puts faith in Christ. He is born of the Spirit. Love comes in. It enters all we do. God teaches us how to use it (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

Jude 21 instructs us to keep ourselves in the love of God. God puts it there, but there is a part we must do to keep it true within our lives. Obey its impulses; obey the Spirit's leadings. Keep praying, trusting God, studying and obeying the Bible. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:5).

More Than a Social Gospel

God's requirement of love is not fulfilled in the "social Gospel." This is the widespread theory that the purpose of the church is to raise the present condition of people. It seeks their social and economic good. This is not the goal Christ set. (Read Mark 16:15-16.)

Acts of charity—feeding the hungry, helping the troubled, comforting the sorrowing—do not fill the whole measure required of Christian love. The world is easily touched by these needs. They are natural, which is where the world lives. Worldly people tend to feel this is real Christianity; this is all there is to it. These acts hold a sure place in a Christian's duty, but more is required.

The purpose of the church is to supply the spiritual and eternal needs also. The love of God dictates this right along with the physical or natural needs. This love brings us glory in the Cross of Christ and in suffering for His cause.

JUST A THOUGHT

**"No man works harder against his own interests than
the man who works for them exclusively."**

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