

### **The Greatest of These Is Love**

The greatest attribute of Christian life, according to Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13), is love. Love, unlike the transitory spiritual gifts of the first century, would never fail (1 Corinthians 13:8). In fact, love even rises above faith and hope. Faith and hope will be realized, but love continues forever. Love resides as the crown jewel to be pursued by faithful, diligent Christians (1 Corinthians 14:1), who desire to please God; but man, blinded by all sinfulness and darkness, must be taught true, God-like love. Christians, seeking to learn and exemplify true love in their lives, should look to the great Teacher and personification of love, God.

God's nature is such a demonstration of love that John declared, "God is love" (1 John 4:16). He has demonstrated his love for man in a multitude of ways. We see it demonstrated in the love that he showed to the nation of Israel and the love that he has shown for all men's spiritual needs.

Moses exhorted the Israelites to love God and keep his commandments; God, in turn, would love them (Deuteronomy 7:8-9). Despite this admonition from Moses, the Israelites failed miserably in their service to God. A casual reading alone of the Old Testament clearly reveals their unfaithfulness.

God showed his love for the Israelites from the time of their wilderness wanderings to the time of the wicked kings of the divided nation. He provided them with food, water, deliverance, miracles, his Law, etc. Like a loving, human father, he disciplined them, desiring that they return to him. He provided for their every need, yet they rejected him time and time again. Then, as their final destruction loomed ominously overhead, God, through his prophet, exclaimed that he loved them with an everlasting love and would rebuild Israel (Jeremiah 31:3-4). Though they rebelled against God with every form of wickedness, God still loved them, and would eventually bless all nations of the world through them.

God's greatest showing of love is evidenced in the manner that he blessed all nations through Israel. While the world lay, like the Israelites, in the great trepidation of sin, he sent his only begotten Son (John 3:16) to the earth to die for us (Romans 5:8). This great, majestic love of God, not sparing his own Son (Romans 8:32), saved man by making him alive through Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5) the propitiation for man's sins (1 John 3:1). Henceforth reconciled to God, through the blood of Christ (Romans 5:8-9), he loves us and calls us his children (1 John 3:1). Truly, as Paul told the Romans, we should rejoice that God loved us that much (5:11).

Rejoicing as we should in the love of God, it is also imperative that we learn from God's example how we should love. God, though despised, rejected, blasphemed and forgotten, sought man's well being at all times and at all costs. He loved man to the point that he sent his only Son (1 John 4:9). Are we willing to love like that? John said, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Brethren, let us take a lesson from God and let love abound (1 Thessalonians 3:12)!

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