

Love

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (Galatians 5:22 KJV)

Love is the “first fruits” of the Spirit. Without love, all else is in vain. It is only through love that we are saved. It is by love we have mercy and grace to see us through our daily lives. Love is what kept Jesus on the cross, not nails. Jesus gave two commandments that were greater than all the rest:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31 KJV)

Today, the word love has been stretched thin. We love everything today. We love a certain type of food, a particular TV show, our spouse, our children, our parents, our pastors and about a hundred other things and people. We have no differing words, they are all love. I think we have come to a point to where it is difficult for people in general to know what love really is about, and how to love deeply and in different ways. Certainly the love you have for your wife is different than that which you have for your pastor, which is different than that which you have for your children. The “love” for foods, TV, etc... is really not love at all, but more along the lines of “like” or fondness, something you enjoy. In today’s dictionary, love is defined as all these things. Webster’s says love is fond attachment, passion between the sexes, to like, to delight in or regard with affection. The English language has become watered down and weak. The word used for love in the verses above is “agapao” (Greek). This word is used to mean specifically love in a moral or social sense. When speaking of a fondness for an activity or thing, the word is “phileo”. This word has totally different implications, yet is translated the same as “agapao”. Perhaps the most telling verse in the Bible about love is found in Galatians:

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13 KJV)

Love serves one another, which sounds fairly simple. A look at the Greek words used tells a little more. The word used for serve is “douleuo”, which means “to be a slave to” or be in bondage. Love gives everything with no expectation of something in return. Love is out of a pure and undefiled purpose of serving another person to make them stronger, better, happier, etc... Do we really love God that way today? Do we love Him because He is the “I Am”, or because we want something in return?

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 KJV)

Are you willing to give EVERYTHING to your friend out of love? This verse means more than just willing to die. The word used for life is “psuche”, or breath, and by implication, spirit. If they were speaking merely of vitality the word would be “zoe”. If it was merely talking about the spirit, the word would be “pneuma”. So you see, the greatest love we can have is to give our entire being to someone as a friend. Jesus was a friend to the publicans and sinners, in fact, He was, and still is, a friend to the entire world.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 KJV)

Jesus gave it all, everything, so that we would not have to perish. He *loved us*, to the greatest extent possible.

We should put our entire being into love. I called love the “first-fruits” of the Spirit earlier. I say this because of the meaning of the first fruits. In the Old Testament harvest, the first fruits, or first gathering, from the fields were offered to the Lord as an offering, so that the rest of the harvest would be blessed. Our first fruit has to be love, for we cannot even begin to serve (be a slave to) God without true love. Once we show that love of God, then surely other fruits of the spirit will follow. Once we show a true love for God, He will bless the rest of our labors.

So what are some things the Bible says about love? Here are some references:

- Love from God is better than life itself – Psalms 63:3 (KJV)
- Love gives cheerfully – 2 Corinthians 9:7 (KJV)
- Love corrects – Proverbs 3:12 (KJV)
- Love sacrifices greatly – John 3:16 (KJV)
- You should wear love as a protection and banner for God – 1 Thessalonians 5:8 (KJV)
- Love serves one another – Galatians 5:13 (KJV)
- Love is strong as death – Song of Solomon 8:6 (KJV)
- Love your enemies – Matthew 5:44 (KJV)
- Love others as you love yourself – Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8
- Love does not harm others – Romans 13:10 (KJV)
- Love should be our path for life – Ephesians 5:2 (KJV)

Love is the root of the entire Bible, without love, nothing else happens. Without love, there would have been no cross, no plan of salvation, no deliverance for a fiery furnace, no healings in the New Testament, no survival in the belly of a whale, in fact, no Bible at all. Enjoy the first fruits of the Spirit, and get ready for the main harvest.