

a sermon from I CORINTHIANS 13:1-13 -

**LOVE IS THE GREATEST GIFT!**

νυνι δε μενει πιστις, ελπις, αγαπη, τα τρια ταυτα: μειζων δε τουτων η αγαπη.

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PREFACE:

This is a sermon written from both English and Greek texts of I CORINTHIANS 13 to examine the question, “What is love?”

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## ABSTRACT

I CORINTHIANS 13 holds a wealth of instruction from The LORD Himself to men on what love is, what it is not, how it is to act and its place in the Divinely-ordained order of life. Spiritual gifts of languages, prophecy and the deepest wisdom are as nothing before the throne of GOD without love. Good works without love are also as nothing, even to the extremities of giving away all one has to the poor and dying a martyr's death for The Faith. Love is not self-centered nor harsh, but is others-centered and gentle. Love abhors evil and takes joy in what is upright in others.

It is long-suffering under extremity for the sake of others. Love outlasts all other spiritual graces. By GOD's love, Christian men shall come to know GOD face-to-face in Heaven because of The Father's love for mankind in the sacrifice made by The Son. All other spiritual gifts may pass away, but love remains. All other spiritual graces are desirous, but love is the greatest of them. For it is written, "GOD is love" [I JOHN 4:8b]. The Almighty offers His love to the sons of men at The Cross of CHRIST, expecting that we would love Him and love each other in return.

## DEDICATION

This sermon is dedicated to the preservation of happy and godly marriages, and to the love that builds them, that the hurtful spectre of divorce might be cast away from every family. For if a man and woman can understand how GOD defines love in The Holy Scriptures, they will find the antidote to any severing of their marital bonds to each other, to their children and to GOD.

## EPIGRAPH

I CORINTHIANS 13:13, "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

## I. INTRODUCTION

I CORINTHIANS 13:13 tells us to abide in "...faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."<sup>1</sup> Is it not "true love to GOD and man... [that grows] out of sincere and fervent devotion to GOD?"<sup>2</sup> And is not true that "The love of GOD is the first duty of man... which afford[s] the highest delight to the sanctified heart?"<sup>3</sup> And is it not so that The Holy Bible "records the greatest love story ever written - GOD's unconditional love for us that sent His Son to die on the cross... [for us]?"<sup>4</sup> But what then is love? Let us explore further with Saint Paul as he writes to the Corinthian Church about the most perfect and desirable of all spiritual graces - better even than all spiritual gifts - which is love.

## II. SPIRITUAL GIFTS WITHOUT LOVE ARE AS NOTHING

### I CORINTHIANS 13:1

The New King James Version reads, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."<sup>5</sup>

“εαν ταις γλωσσαις των ανθρωπων λαλω και των αγγελων, αγαπην δε μη εχω, γεγωνα χαλκος ηχων η κυμβαλον αλαλαζον.”<sup>6</sup>

What is the value of being able to speak all languages of men and even those of angels if a man has no love in his heart? It is as nothing. For even with such wondrous elegance of speech, if it is without love, "it would be all empty noise, mere unharmonious and useless sound, that would neither profit nor delight!"<sup>7</sup> St. Paul says that even if we could lay hold of all the words of men on earth and angels in Heaven, if we have no love behind them, our speech is become as the meaningless roaring of the seas!

My friends, it is not fine speech that GOD looks for out of our mouths, but rather earnest love out of our hearts. Love for Him and love for our brethren. For without the

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<sup>1</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.

<sup>2</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2267, I CORINTHIANS 13:1-3, Verses 1-3, introduction.

<sup>3</sup> 3, Webster's 1828 Dictionary, p LOV to LOV, entry under "LOVE, n.," 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> 4, Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible, p 656.

<sup>5</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

<sup>6</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

<sup>7</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2267, I CORINTHIANS 13:1-3, Verses 1-3, v1.

burning “desire [to] place first in [our] affections” The Almighty and our fellow man, empty words that clang from our mouths are as nothingness!<sup>8</sup>

### I CORINTHIANS 13:2

From the New King James Version, “And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”<sup>9</sup> And in the Greek, “και εαν εχω προφητειαν και ειδω τα μυστηρια παντα και πασαν την γνωσιν, και εαν εχω πασαν την πιστιν ωστε ορη μεθισταναι, αγαπην δε μη εχω, ουθεν ειμι.”<sup>10</sup>

To think of the great glory and stunning insight a man would have, should he be granted all the prophesy, understanding, knowledge and faith in the universe is indeed great! But even if we could lay hold of such insights, even to being able to move mountains with our words, they are as nothing without love! Consider if it were possible for a mere man to have complete “understanding of the prophecies and types under the old dispensation, ever so accurate a knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, ...[received from] inspiration from the infallible dictates and illumination of the [very] Spirit of GOD”<sup>11</sup> For St. Paul warns that, even if a man could possess all such insight, without love he is as nothing before The LORD!

### III. WORKS WITHOUT LOVE ARE AS NOTHING

#### I CORINTHIANS 13:3

In the New King James Version, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”<sup>12</sup> “καν ψωμισω παντα τα υπαρχοντα μου, και εαν παραδω το σωμα

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<sup>8</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for αγαπη [love] "agapae," p 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:2.

<sup>10</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:2.

<sup>11</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2267, I CORINTHIANS 13:1-3, Verses 1-3, v2.

<sup>12</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:3.

μου ινα καυχησωμαι, αγαπην δε μη εχω, ουδεν ωφελουμαι.”<sup>13</sup>

Even if I gave away every possession and penny I owned in this world for good works to help those in need, without love it accounts for nothing. Even if I “give over” my very body to all punishment and “commend” [my body] to be “delivered up” even to horrific death in the hottest flames, if it is not done with love, in The Creator’s eyes my sacrifice of glory would be of no advantage to me!<sup>14</sup> Yes, “benevolence is good, but not apart from love.”<sup>15</sup> For St. Paul cautions us that vain-glorious giving of charity to the poor and even a martyr’s death for The Faith is of no benefit to us before GOD if done without love; they are as nothing!

#### IV. THE ANTITHESIS OF LOVE - WHAT LOVE IS NOT

##### I CORINTHIANS 13:4b

The New King James Version gives us, “Love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;”<sup>16</sup> And from the Greek text,

“[η αγαπη] ου ζηλοι, [η αγαπη] ου περπερευεται, ου φυσιουται,”<sup>17</sup>

Love does not burn with zealous rage of jealousy at the blessings and gifts of others who have what we do not. For if “we love our neighbour, we shall be so far from envying his welfare... that we shall share in it and rejoice at it.”<sup>18</sup> Love does not extol its own virtues, nor boast of itself. Nor is love conceited or does it brag of itself.<sup>19</sup> Love is not carried in pride and loftiness. Thus, love can not be full of self-pride and vain-glory at the expense of others in the humble and pious man. In this way, love “is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt or scorn.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:3.

<sup>14</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for παραδιδωμι [I deliver over] "paradidomai," p 132.

<sup>15</sup> 7, Scofield KJV, comments on I CORINTHIANS 13, footnote 2, p 1223.

<sup>16</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:4.

<sup>17</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:4.

<sup>18</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2268, I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7, Verses 4-7, III.

<sup>19</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for περπερευομαι [I am conceited] "perpereuomai," p 141.

<sup>20</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2268, I CORINTHIANS 13:3-7, Verses 4-7, IV.

I CORINTHIANS 13:5

In the New King James Version we read, “[Love] does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;”<sup>21</sup> And in the Greek we have, “[η αγαπη] ουκ ασχημονει, ου ζητει τα εαυτης, ου παροξυνεται, ου λογιζεται το κακον,”<sup>22</sup>

Love does not act unbecomingly. Rather, love acts with kindness, courtesy, decency and goodwill towards all men, giving insult to none with indecency and dishonour. Nor does love place demands upon others that are self-serving and self-centered. Thus, love “never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or with the neglect of others. [Indeed,] It often neglects its own for the sake of others.”<sup>23</sup> Love does not extol itself in uncontrolled passions of anger against others.

For “where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning.”<sup>24</sup> Love does not meditate within itself upon that which might be wicked or wrong in the lives of others in the absence of overwhelming proof. Nor does love deliberate within itself plans to injure and harm others, for it never allows its owner to be consumed with consumed with unrighteous hunger for revenge.<sup>25</sup>

I CORINTHIANS 13:6a

So we find in the New King James Version, “[Love] does not rejoice in iniquity...”<sup>26</sup> And in the Greek, “[η αγαπη] ου χαιρει επι τη αδικια,”<sup>27</sup>

Love does not take pleasure in seeing evil done to anyone or by anyone. Love does not obtain any joy in sin, nor in the fruits of ungodliness - not in enemies or in friends; not in the saved or the unsaved; not in The Church nor in the lost heathen world outside The Church.

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<sup>21</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:5.

<sup>22</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:5.

<sup>23</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2268, I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7, Verses 4-7, VI.

<sup>24</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, p 2268, I CORINTHIANS 13:4-7, Verses 4-7, VII.

<sup>25</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for η κακος “kakos” [evil], p 91.

<sup>26</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:6a.



## V. THE MARKS OF TRUE LOVE - WHAT LOVE IS

### I CORINTHIANS 13:4a

From the New King James Version, “Love suffers long, love is kind;”<sup>28</sup> And from the Greek, “η αγαπη μακροθυμει, χρηστευεται η αγαπη,”<sup>29</sup>

Love is slow to anger against the one it cherishes. Love bears itself patiently in times of trouble for the one it cares for. This is the love of which is said to be “the fruit of the Spirit.” For if the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we will show forth works of love to GOD and to our neighbour. This is the love of which our Lord JESUS CHRIST is the ultimate “personification of love,” in that The Son of GOD Himself took up our sins and covered them with His righteousness at The Cross for us!<sup>30</sup>

### I CORINTHIANS 13:6b

Here the New King James Version gives us, “But [love] rejoices in the truth;”<sup>31</sup> And from the Greek, “[η αγαπη] συγχαρει δε τη αληθεια.”<sup>32</sup>

Love takes joy in the joy of others, but only when that joy is rooted in what is “truthful [and] honest” in the sight of GOD.<sup>33</sup> For love desires to see its cherished ones uplifted in upright and godly living as the adopted sons and daughters of GOD in CHRIST.

### I CORINTHIANS 13:7

The New King James Version reads, “[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”<sup>34</sup> And the Greek reads,

“[η αγαπη] παντα στεγει, παντα πιστευει, παντα ελπίζει, παντα υπομενει.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:6a.

<sup>28</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:4a.

<sup>29</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:4a.

<sup>30</sup> 8, Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament, I CORINTHIANS 13:4, p 535.

<sup>31</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:6:b.

<sup>32</sup> 5, Greek Bible online, I CORINTHIANS 13:6:b.

<sup>33</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for αληθεια “alethia” [truth], p 7.

<sup>34</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:7.

<sup>35</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:7.

Love forbears, protects and endures for the sake of its cherished ones. Love places confidence in the souls of its cherished ones and trusts GOD in all things of faith on their behalf. Love waits with all desire in joy for the salvation of its cherished ones. Love endures under trial and holds fast to faith in CHRIST when the storms of life billow on behalf of those it cherishes. For love “is not to be [unduly] suspicious of sin,” but if “sin is evident, [love] ...must judge it and support its discipline.”<sup>36</sup>

## VI. LOVE OUTLASTS ALL OTHER SPIRITUAL GRACES

### I CORINTHIANS 13:8

We find in the New King James Version, “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”<sup>37</sup> And in the Greek we read,

“η αγαπη ουδεποτε πιπτει. ειτε δε προφηται, καταργηθησονται: ειτε γλωσσαι, παυσονται: ειτε γνωσις, καταργηθησεται.”<sup>38</sup>

Love does not fall to ruin and perish, nor can it be thrown down and come to an end, even though all other spiritual gifts and graces given to the saints of CHRIST in The Church will one day do so. For when The Church is perfected, “gifts will be rendered obsolete. But this will not happen to love!”<sup>39</sup> Divinely inspired predictions of future events revealed by the very mind of GOD to men will be put to an end, but love will never fail!

The languages of nations and stations unknown ignited as holy utterances in The Church by The Spirit will restrain themselves into silence, but love will never cease! Understanding and wisdom revealed from the very throne of The Almighty to mankind will some day be done away with, but love will never vanish away! For I JOHN 4:8 declares that “GOD is love.”<sup>40</sup> This being so, nothing in the universe can ever render His love for us “ineffective, nullified, cancelled, destroyed or abolished!”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> 9, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, I CORINTHIANS 13:7, p 1252.

<sup>37</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:8.

<sup>38</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:8.

<sup>39</sup> 8, Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament, I CORINTHIANS 13:8, p 536.

<sup>40</sup> 7, Scofield KJV, I JOHN 4:8b, p 1324. [“for GOD is love.”]

<sup>41</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, entry for καταργεω “katargeo” [I cancel], p 95.

VII. TOWARDS A DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF AND FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

I CORINTHIANS 13:9

The New King James Version, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”<sup>42</sup>  
“εκ μερους γαρ γινωσκομεν και εκ μερους προφητευομεν:”<sup>43</sup>

In this earthly world as Christians, we perceive and understand our future destiny in Heaven with a measure of only partial degree. And so in this mortal state, even the saints in CHRIST speak of a future dwelling place for the saved forever before the throne of The LORD with limited words that are but shadows of heavenly joys to come! “How little a portion of GOD, and the unseen world, was heard even by apostles and inspired men?”<sup>44</sup> And so we wait in love with patience for a more perfect home!

I CORINTHIANS 13:10

Here the New King James Version gives us, “But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.”<sup>45</sup> And the Greek text reads, “οταν δε ελθη το τελειον, το εκ μερους καταργηθησεται.”<sup>46</sup>

But when The Messiah CHRIST JESUS has returned for His Church on earth, then the immature spiritual foods of The Church and the Christian man - tongues, prophesy, revelation - will all be rendered of no further use, terminate and cease. For why would GOD’s saints need such imperfect Divine gifts to know The Creator when we will joyously dwell with Him forever in Heaven and see our Lord face-to-face in eternity? For at “the Lord’s second coming... [we shall see] the end of the exercise of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.”<sup>47</sup> The Christian man upon entry into Heaven will as well have no further use of such imperfect gifts, for he shall dwell forever in the glorious presence of The Saviour Himself.

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<sup>42</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:9.

<sup>43</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:9.

<sup>44</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, I CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, II, p 2269.

<sup>45</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:10.

<sup>46</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:10.

<sup>47</sup> 9, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, I CORINTHIANS 13:10, p 1252

I CORINTHIANS 13:11

The New King James Version reads, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”<sup>48</sup> And we have from The Greek Text:

“οτε ημην νηπιος, ελαλουν ως νηπιος, εφρονουν ως νηπιος,  
ελογιζομην ως νηπιος: οτε γεγονα ανηρ, καταργηκα τα του νηπιου.”

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As the child that was given increasingly complex gifts, toys, books and education as he matured towards adulthood, so also The Church with certain spiritual gifts. What was useful in his childhood came to be no longer needed in his adulthood. Just so GOD provided certain spiritual gifts of tongues, prophesy and knowledge to increase learning in His early Church. Those same gifts became increasingly unneeded as The Church matured. So also with the life of the Christian as his faith deepens over the years. For St. Paul says that, when The Church was in her youth, she used the speech of an immature faith; understood the things of GOD with only limited wisdom; reasoned matters of faith with only partial reckoning. So also as the Christian grows in CHRIST over time.

As The Church and the Christian man work towards “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of CHRIST,” a better and fuller state of closeness to The LORD is reached.<sup>50</sup> For when The Church grew past her infancy, she came to possess the complete canon of Scripture and two thousand years of tradition, exposition of The Bible and experience. Thus she ceased from needing the spiritual gifts of her youth as much as she once did. And as The Church grows to full maturity towards the return of her Lord JESUS CHRIST, so she approached the time when she put away the spiritual gifts she held during her youth. So also it can be said of the Christian man who, after he reached Heaven, became perfected in CHRIST and ceased from relying on such spiritual gifts.

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<sup>48</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:11.

<sup>49</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:11.

<sup>50</sup> 8, Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament, I CORINTHIANS 13:11, p 536.

I CORINTHIANS 13:12

The New King James Version gives us, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, (but then face to face). Now I know in part, (but then I shall know just as I also am known.)”<sup>51</sup>  
“βλεπομεν γαρ αρτι δι εσοπτρου εν αινιγματι, (τοτε δε προσωπον προς προσωπον): αρτι γινωσκω εκ μερους, (τοτε δε επιγνωσομαι καθως και επεγνωσθην.)”<sup>52</sup>

In this passing life, we apprehend only a an enigma vaguely of the glory, majesty and love of GOD. But when we the saved in CHRIST are escorted by angles into our heavenly home, we shall look upon the countenance of The Almighty and live!<sup>53</sup> Our image reflecting back to us as in a mirror in this life allows us to know only imperfectly The LORD Who placed His Image within us.

But in eternity we shall know The LORD much more clearly and in the same affectionate understanding with which we are understood by He Who created us! For St. Paul knew as he wrote to the Corinthians that “the perfect time which awaited him and The Church when the partial reflection of the present world would give way to the splendor of perfect vision. Then Paul would see GOD... as GOD now saw Paul. Then partial knowledge... would be displaced by the perfect knowledge of GOD!”<sup>54</sup>

VIII. LOVE IS THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

Here the New King James Version reads, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”<sup>55</sup> And the Greek text gives us,

“νυνη δε μενει πιστις, ελπις, αγαπη, τα τρια ταυτα: μειζων δε τουτων η αγαπη.”<sup>56</sup>

The great grace of faith in CHRIST that GOD fills His saints with remains even in

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<sup>51</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:12.

<sup>52</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:12.

<sup>53</sup> 6, Greek-English Dictionary, from an adverbial expression of προσωπον “prosopon” [face]; can also mean literally “face to face” when written προσωπον προς προσωπον, p 155.

<sup>54</sup> 8, Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament, I CORINTHIANS 13:12, p 536.

<sup>55</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.

<sup>56</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.

adversity. The wondrous grace of hope in CHRIST for a better world to come that GOD blesses us with waits for us without wavering. Love - the very grace for which GOD sent His Son to atone for our sins on The Cross - endures forever. All of these three Divine graces are offered to all men, but only some men accept them. And of all these three Divine graces, there is no greater than love. For “when faith and hope are at an end, true... [love] will burn for ever with the brightest flame.”<sup>57</sup>

#### IX. WHAT THEN IS TO BE SAID?

My friends, we started by asking, “What is love by GOD’s standards?” In I CORINTHIANS 13 we have found some answers. We see that spiritual gifts without love are as nothing: The gift of being able to speak in all human and even angelic tongues without love is as nothing. Having the gifts of prophesy, all understanding and all knowledge even approaching the infinite mind of GOD Himself are as nothing without love. Having even the gift of faith so strong that you could command mountains to move, if not accompanied by love, is as nothing.

We see that good works without love are as nothing. Even if you gave everything you had to feed the poor, it would account as nothing without love before GOD. Should you even willingly give up your very body to be martyred in the flames of persecution without love, it would account as nothing before GOD. Love does not envy the blessings of others, nor does it carry itself about on display, nor is it self centered and conceited. Love is not insensitive nor insulting. It does not glory for its own sake, nor does it seek self-glory and self-benefit, nor is it easily provoked unto wrath, nor is it capable of long entertaining evil thoughts towards others. For love does not take joy in sin and evil.

Rather, love endures hardship for others and is kind-hearted. Love takes joy in seeing others come to The Truth of GOD in CHRIST. Love bears all hardships, believes all good things of others, hopes for all good things in others and endures all things for others. Love outlasts all spiritual gifts. Prophecies, speaking in tongues and deep spiritual wisdom in all matters of life of both this world and the next will all pass away.

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<sup>57</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, I CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, IV, p 2269. This commentary uses “charity” in the place of love, which is the case in the Authorized KJV Bible. The New KJV Bible substitutes the word “love.” Thus, I have done the same with substituting “love” for “charity.”

But after they are no more, love remains.

In this earthly life we know GOD and prophecy of Him only partially. But GOD's love for us assures us that, when our Lord JESUS CHRIST has returned, then our partial knowledge of Him will cease. In infancy, The Church and the Christian man spoke, understood and thought in immaturity. But when our faith is perfected in CHRIST in Heaven, we put away these incomplete gifts in favor of living forever with The Author and Giver of life. For in this life, we see GOD and ourselves only in part. But in Heaven, the saints know The Heavenly Father perfectly and as He sees us - covered in righteousness by the sacrifice of CHRIST on our behalf.

And so we find that of all the spiritual graces which GOD bestows upon men, such as faith, hope and love, the greatest of them all is love. "How much does it exceed the most valuable gift, when it outshines every grace, and is the everlasting consummation of them!"<sup>58</sup> It is because of this Most Perfect Love which comes from GOD that Job knew, as we read in JOB 19:26, that "though, after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD."<sup>59</sup> And it is because of This Most Perfect Love - the love of The Father - that The Son commands all men in MATTHEW 22:36-40 to "...love the Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... [and to] love thy neighbour as thyself."<sup>60</sup>

## X. IN CONCLUSION

It has been said that love "is the surest offspring of GOD, and bears His fairest impression. 'For GOD is love'...And where GOD is to be seen as He is, and face to face, there... [love] is in its greatest height - there, and there only, will it be perfected."<sup>61</sup> This assurance in GOD's love - a love superior to all spiritual gifts and other spiritual graces - that the Psalmist wrote in PSALM 117:2, "For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of The LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye The LORD."<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps the reason for the superiority of love over all other graces and gifts bestowed upon mere men by The LORD is that love is part of the very essence of our

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<sup>58</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, I CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, IV, p 2269.

<sup>59</sup> 7, Scofield's KJV, JOB 19:26, p 581.

<sup>60</sup> 7, Scofield's KJV, MATTHEW 22:36-40, p 1031.

<sup>61</sup> 2, Matthew Henry Bible Commentaries, I CORINTHIANS 13:8-13, IV, p 2269.

Creator. Because – as is declared in I JOHN 4:8b - “GOD is love,” the closer The Church and the Christian man draw to Him, the greater The Image of GOD implanted in us shines out the light love.<sup>63</sup> That love is of the very nature of GOD! For it is because of the superiority of Divine love above all other graces that, as we find in JOHN 3:16, “GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”<sup>64</sup>

Let us thus remember that, if we have not love, we are as nothing, no matter what else we may possess before GOD and men. For as we read in I CORINTHIANS 13:13, “*νυνι δε μενει πιστις, ελπις, αγαπη, τα τρια ταυτα: μειζων δε τουτων η αγαπη.*”<sup>65</sup> “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love!”<sup>66</sup> In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

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<sup>62</sup> 7, Scofield's KJV, PSALMS 117:2, p 657.

<sup>63</sup> 7, Scofield's KJV, I JOHN 4:8b, p 1324.

<sup>64</sup> 7, Scofield's KJV, JOHN 3:16, p 1117-1118.

<sup>65</sup> 5, Greek Bible, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.

<sup>66</sup> 1, NJKV, I CORINTHIANS 13:13.



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