

## GROWING IN LOVE

### Int.

1. Aim: To show how God expects us to grow in love.
2. 1 Thes. 3:12 "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:"
3. God expects us to grow in many ways. We cannot remain a babe all our life.
4. Words about growth:
  - a. **Grow** = To increase in size by a natural process, to expand; gain, to increase in amount or degree, to develop and reach maturity, to allow something to develop or increase by a natural process
  - b. **Increase** = to superabound, abundant, make to increase
  - c. **Abound** = be in excess, be superfluous; to excel, abundant, enough and to spare, exceed, excel [translated by overflow in 1 Thes.3:12]
5. The Bible teaches more on LOVE than any other subject.

### Discussion

#### I. IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

- A. It is "first" commandment - Mt. 22:37-40
- B. It is the fulfillment of the law
  - a. Rom. 13:8-10 "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

- b. Gal. 5:14-15 "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."
- C. It is the "capstone" of the "graces" 2 Pet. 1:5-7
- D. It is the greatest of all that abides - 1 Cor. 13:13
- E. It is the first fruit of the spirit - Gal. 5:22 "But the fruit of the spirit is Love..."
- F. It is the bond of perfectness - Col. 3:14 "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

## **II. GROWING IN LOVE**

### A. Definition **What is Love ?**

1. Agape = means "full of good will" "desire the best"
2. Webster = "Strong feeling of affection...attachment to..."
3. Three types or ways of demonstrating love:
  - (1) **Utilitarian** = a selfish love that loves for what benefits love will bring to self
  - (2) **Mechanical** = a love that is forced as a matter of necessity or duty
  - (3) **True** = selfless devotion; adoration -- this is agape
4. Love is more than a characteristic of God: it is his character.
5. "God is Love" - 1 Jn. 4:8b

B. III. Love is like a bright light. Love is like a great bright light around which there is a larger polished reflector. From the light itself there go out strong brilliant beams, then the reflector takes that light and bounces it back, and also out in other directions. It reflects the light.

1. That is what we as Christians are to do. Think of the love of God coming down from heaven, warming mankind as the sun comes down and warms our earth. We depend upon the warmth of the sun; we depend even more upon the warmth of God's love.
2. Our main business in life is to be that large, polished, well-placed reflector, that reflects God's love to all those about us and sends part of it back to God himself.
3. That is our purpose in life

C. Notice We Should Love:

1. God and Christ

- a. Mt. 22:37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."
- b. Eph. 6:24 "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."
- c. How do we show that we love God and Christ ?
  - (1) Keep His Commandments -
  - (2) Jn 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
  - (3) 1 Jn.5:3 "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

## 2. Our Fellow-man

### a. Christian Brethren -

- (1) 1 Jn. 4:20 "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"
- (2) Jn. 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35. By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
- (3) 1 Jn. 2:9-11 "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."
- (4) 1 Jn. 3:15 "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."
- (5) 1 Pet. 1:22 "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:"
- (6) We must love the brotherhood 1 Pet. 2:17 "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
- (7) If brethren can't love one another on earth, how do you suppose they could enjoy heaven together?

(8) Someone has said that love is the oil that smooths human relations. I II.

Squeaky door, or wheel. Put oil on it and it stops.

(9) Application. Sometimes there is friction between humans. The oil of love makes life go smoother.

## b. Family

### (1) His parents:

(a) Eph. 6:2 "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;"

(b) Mk. 7:8-12

(c) 1 Tim. 5:4 "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God."

### (2) His mate

(a) Eph. 5:25-33

(b) Col. 3:18-19 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

(c) Love actually does something. It is more than just a feeling.

- i) World's longest Kiss - The world record for the longest kiss belongs to a 19 year old boy and his 16 year old girlfriend. They kissed for 105 minutes and 48 seconds. It ended when they were at the point of passing out for lack of oxygen. \*\*\*

ii) But that does not mean they actually love one another. A kiss can be an expression of love. But Remember Judas kissed Christ to betray him.

(d) Love is more than just words:

(e) World's longest love letter - In 1875 a man in Paris, France wrote a letter to the one he loved. It contained the phrase in French "I LOVE YOU" 1,875,000 times - a thousand times for each year to that date. But he did not write it himself. He hired a scribe to write it for him. He dictated it word for word and had the scribe repeat it every time. So before this letter reached his girlfriend the expression "I love you" had been uttered and written 5,625,000 times. [p.755-756 Ency. of Ill.]

(f) A person may write "I love you" or say "I love you" but unless it is backed up by actions then it is useless.

(3) Children - Titus 2:4

c. His enemies

(1) Mt. 5:44-48 **MATT 5:44. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"**

(2) Rom. 12:19-21 "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

## d. The Lost

(1) Rom. 9:1-3

(2) Rom. 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

(3) Rom. 1:14-15

(4) Mt. 9:36-38 "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

D. How do We show that we love God, Christ and our Fellow man?1. We sacrifice liberally for those we love

a. 2 Sam 24:24 "...Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."

b. 2 Cor. 9:7 "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

c. Acts 20:35b "... It is more blessed to give than to receive."

2. We strive to please those we love

a. Do we strive to please God and Jesus

b. Mt.6:10 "...thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

c. Do we want to please our fellowman?

3. **We love to be with those we love**

- a. Do we love to spend time with God and Christ?
- b. We will love to worship God - in Attendance
- c. Rev. 3:20
- d. We enjoy the company of those we love! We may not enjoy the company of those who are our enemies.

4. **We love to talk to those we love**

- a.** Do we love to talk to God?
- b. Heb. 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."
- c. 1 Thes. 5:17,18

5. **We are greatly concerned about those we love**

- a. Are we concerned about God, His Son, and His Kingdom and our fellowman
- b. 2 Cor. 11:28 "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

E. God expects and wants us to grow in love!! (KJV) 1Thes. 3:12 "***And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:***"

### III. THERE IS GREAT POWER IN LOVE

- A. Love is the most powerful force in the universe
  1. More power in love than physical force
  2. More power in love than sarcasm, rebuke, or argument
  3. By The power of love the Lord lifts us, changes us, leads us upward and onward to a brighter and better world.
  4. The Love of God compels - draws - constrains us
    - a. 2 Cor. 5:14 "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:"
    - b. Constraineth = "compels" NIV "Controls" RSV
    - c. "To hold together" [Strong's #4912]
  
- B. There is great power in love:
  1. On Ourselves
    - a. Every emotion we have has an effect upon ourselves.
    - b. If we hate someone then we suffer.
    - c. But if we love another person then not only is that person blessed by our love but it is also a blessing to us
    - d. Acts 20:35 "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
    - e. Though our love toward an enemy may never touch his heart, it is never in vain.
    - f. Love purifies us - Rm. 13:8-10 Esp. v. 8 and v.10
    - g. Love makes us more Godlike - Mt. 5:44,45 1 Jn.4:4-5
    - h. It fits us for heaven where love prevails

## 2. Love is powerful on our fellowman

- a. Happy results come when we bestow our love on others.
- b. It is an impossibility for us to overcome evil with evil, but we can overcome evil with Good!!!
  - (1) Love overcomes malice - hatred in the heart
    - (a) Love wins
    - (b) Prov. 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
  - (2) Love draws them
    - (a) Jer. 31:3 "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."
    - (b) Hatred drives, but love Draws
    - (c) While hatred isolates -- makes lonely in life -- love makes friends.
  - (3) Love binds them
    - (a) Love binds brother to brother, people to people
    - (b) It is the element - bond - the cement that promotes and preserves the unity of God's people
    - (c) Col. 2:2 "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love,..."
    - (d) Col. 3:14 "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

## (4) Love Ennobles -

- (a) It encourages, it makes life worth living.
- (b) The love of one person causes a man to desire to live.
- (c) How miserable the man who thinks that no person loves him.

3. Love is Powerful on God.

- a. Love causes the greatest spiritual force in the universe to operate in our favor.
- b. God makes his abode in the loving heart
- c. Jn.14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

## C. The mighty force of love is within our grasp

- 1. Let us take hold of love and use it, not selfishly, for when it is selfish, then it ceases to be love.
- 2. Life is much sweeter with love!
- 3. Our influence for good is greater when we are motivated by LOVE.
- 4. Hatred is weak but love is powerful.
- 5. 1 Cor. 16:14 "Let all your things be done with charity."

## Conclusion

1. We must grow in love !!
  2. We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.
  3. Love isn't like a reservoir. You'll never drain it dry. It's much more like a natural spring. The longer and farther it flows, the stronger and the deeper and the clearer it becomes.
  4. Growth in love for God, and his word and his church is essential to being faithful as a child of God.
  5. Phil. 1:9 "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;"
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