

“Love Believes All Things”
(1 Corinthians 13:7b)

Introduction: Last week we were looking at the wonderful reality that the love which God gives us as His people will give us the strength to bear up under any kind of suffering that we will ever have to endure. This is a blessed promise, especially in light of the way the world seems to be going today. It may not be too long before Christians will no longer be tolerated even in this country. It may not be too long before we suffer an even greater persecution. On the other hand, who knows but perhaps the Lord will shortly turn things around and bring revival again to this nation. But either way, we will be ready, because we are armed with the love of Christ. We are willing to pay whatever price we must to follow Christ. We have the fear of the Lord in our hearts and aren't afraid of what man can do to us. We can see the One who is unseen by faith and look to Him for our encouragement and hope. We don't consider that our citizenship here is lasting, but know that we are the citizens of the heavenly realm and have our eyes fixed on the things above. With the fruit of God's love to uphold us in Christ, we will be able to hold out against anything, even if it means the loss of everything we have, even our own lives. If we trust in the Lord and follow Him, in the end we will really lose nothing, for the Lord will plead our cause, and He will take us up to be with Him. This evening, I would like for us to consider the next two characteristics of this love together, because they are so closely related. Paul writes, “Love . . . believes all things [and] hopes all things” (v. 7).

Now many commentators see these two characteristics as meaning that love will make us believe the best and hope for the best concerning our neighbor. Certainly this is true. This doesn't mean, however, that love is gullible. It doesn't mean that those who love in this way will believe things that are obviously not true. It doesn't mean, for instance, that we will believe that a brother or a neighbor is not guilty of some sin, if there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. But it does mean that we will be willing to believe the best about them that the circumstances will allow, and to hope for the best concerning them. But Paul already told us as much in verse 5, where he says, “Love . . . does not take into account a wrong suffered,” which literally means, “Love does not impute evil.” Love will not think the worst of a neighbor or hold a grudge against him. However, what Paul says here is more embracive, more comprehensive. He says that love “believes *all things* [and] hopes *all things*.” Though it is true that this belief and hope will be directed towards our neighbor, it is much more comprehensive than this. Certainly, this must also mean that

Love will move us to believe all things that the Lord tells us and to hope in all that He promises to us.

I. First, we need to understand that all of the fruits of the Spirit's work in our lives always go together. They are a package deal, so to speak.

- A. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).
1. Notice that he says the *fruit* of the Spirit is these things. The word fruit can be a word which includes different kinds of fruit, or it can refer to one kind. In this case, it is one fruit with many different kinds of expression. The fruit is the love He produces in our hearts, and the other things which follow are all the different ways that love works itself out in our lives.
 - a. What is joy, but obtaining the object of our love? When we love God and are able to enter into a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, it gives rise to joy.
 - b. What is peace, but being reconciled through love with the One we were at war with? Through Christ we are reconciled to God, and now we have peace with Him. Through love we can also be at peace with our neighbor and have peace within ourselves, since our conscience will no longer condemn us for our sins.
 - c. What is patience, except love exercised in forbearance towards others?
 - d. What is kindness and goodness, but love expressed in deeds of compassion towards others?
 - e. Faithfulness is love's being devoted to the One that is loved. If you love God, you will be faithful in your love and devotion to Him.
 - f. Gentleness is an expression of love towards other in not wanting to hurt them but to help and

comfort them.

- g. And self-control is also love restricting any bad behavior which might potentially hurt others.
- h. Love is at the root of all of these things. It is the fruit that motivates all the graces of the Christian life.

- 2. If we would simply compare what Paul says of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, with what he says here in 1 Corinthians 13 about the love He creates in our hearts, we would find that he is saying very much the same thing. Love gives rise to all of these fruits and graces of the Christian life. But is the Spirit who produces this love.

B. And the time at which He began to produce these things in us, was at our conversion.

- 1. Every good thing that Jesus is working in us is through this precious gift He gives us of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Paul said this earlier in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*.”
- b. Even though this passage is referring to spiritual gifts, it also applies to the fruits of the Spirit. He is obviously the One who gives them, because it is His fruit.

- 2. But this also tells us that they all come at one time: at conversion, at the time when the Spirit of God came into us and began to dwell in our hearts by faith.

- a. We don’t need a new conversion for each one of them. They come as a package. God gave us the natural gifts we have of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling, as well as the ability to think and to make decisions, when He gave us our human natures. In the same way He gave us all of these spiritual graces when He gave us our spiritual nature, and that was when He saved us.
- b. But at the same time we need to realize that they did not all come in their fullness. They still have to mature in us. When our human nature was conceived, we had a lot of growing and developing to do before we could use our senses or our minds. In the same way, after we are spiritually born, though these things are all in us, they still need to develop, grow and mature, until we become spiritually mature, conforming more and more to God’s holy image.
- c. But the more they develop, the more love we will have; and the more love we have, the more these graces will be there; and the more these graces are there, the more we will be like Christ, which is the reason the Lord gave them to us in the first place. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29).

II. And so all of the graces of the Spirit were created in our lives at conversion, and they all flow out of the most foundational fruit of love. But the most important thing I would like to us to see this evening is that faith and hope also flow out of this love and are the fruit of it. This is why Paul can end the chapter in this way, “But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (v. 13).

A. Love is the greatest because it gives rise to the other two and greatly strengthens them.

- 1. Love is that which gave rise in our hearts to a true faith in God and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. If we didn’t love God, we would never have come to Him in the first place. If we didn’t love Christ, if we hadn’t seen in Him the greatest value and beauty, we never would have believed in Him, we never would have come to Him for His salvation. Love gives birth to faith.
- b. But love also causes faith to grow, because the more we love anyone, the more we will trust them. The more we love God and Christ, the more we will trust them and the more we will cling to them for our salvation.
- c. Along these same lines, love is also that which gives rise to obedience. Faith is an active word. It implies obedience to that which is believed. Because of this, the stronger our love is, the stronger will be our faith, and the stronger our faith, the stronger our obedience will be. Love is a very powerful motive, the most powerful that is known to man. Wars have been fought, lives have been sacrificed, all because of love. It is the love of anything that

moves a man to do whatever he does. If someone loves money, he will seek money. If someone loves fame, he will seek fame. And if someone loves God, he will seek Him and seek to do what He wants him to do.

- d. But love for God will also give rise to a love of our brethren, and a love for our brethren will confirm to us that we really do love God. John tells us, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). He also writes, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe his commandments" (5:2). The reason this is true is that what we love in God is the same thing we will love our brother or sister for
 - e. Love for God gives rise to faith in God. Paul tells us that faith works through love (Gal. 5:6). Without love, faith is dead. Therefore love is greater.
2. But this faith, which comes from love, is that which gives rise to hope, hope in the promises of God.
- a. Hope is that expectation that God will be true to His promises. It doesn't mean that we merely hope that God will fulfill them, but that we know He will, and so we wait eagerly and expectantly for Him to bring them to pass.
 - b. Faith is that which gives birth to this hope, because it is able to look to the one who made the promises and to embrace them as though it already had them. The one who has faith, not only believes what God has promised, but also lives in the expectation of them. We can actually see the fulfillment of the promises, even though they might be a long ways off yet, just as the author to the Hebrews says of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). Through faith we can see the Lord coming for His people at their death. We believe that He will come for us at ours. We know that when we pray for the things which are according to His will that He hears us and that we have what we have asked for, because He has made that promise to us. We can also see the end of all things, the second coming of our Lord, the judgment of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous.
 - c. These things can make a difference in the way we live now, because of the certain hope we have of their fulfillment. All gracious hope is founded upon faith, and hope encourages and draws out our faith.
 - d. And, of course, knowing the wonderful things which the Lord has promised to those who love Him, hope will also draw out and strengthen our love and thankfulness to the Lord for His wonderful grace and mercy.
3. But finally, love also gives birth directly to hope.
- a. Love makes us look to the Lord as our Father, so that we cry out "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15).
 - b. It strengthens our hope that God will not reject us, because He is the One who in His love gave us this love, and has told all who love Him to come to Him and that He will never cast them out.
 - c. And so these three graces of God's Spirit -- faith, hope and love -- all come together, depend on each other, and strengthen one another. But the greatest of these three is love, because it causes the others to rise in our souls.
- B. The bottom line is, if we want to have more faith or more hope, we must have more love. And if we are to have more love, we must have more of God's Holy Spirit.
1. We are reminded again and again in Scripture that the Spirit of God is the source of all of our spiritual blessings.
 - a. This is why Christ came into the world: to purchase for us the gift of the Spirit.
 - b. He is the vital principle of our spiritual life. Without Him, we would be as dead as those who are in the world without Christ.
 2. But the Spirit dwells in us in varying degrees, depending on many things.
 - a. One of these things is, of course, God's will. He determines how much of His Spirit's

influence He will give to each of His children. Although He gives the Spirit to each one of us, He does not give Him equally to us all.

- b. But one thing God does command us is to be filled with the Spirit, that is, to be completely under His control (Eph. 5:18). This means that even though we might not have as much as other Christians, we must still be able to have enough to be controlled in our whole lives by Him.
- c. And so we must seek for His gracious influence. We must use the means that the Lord has given us to get His gracious help, and we must put away all the things in our lives which quench and hinder that work.
- d. One of the most precious means is the Lord's Supper. If we observe it in the right way, it is one of the most powerful ways of receiving God's help. I would encourage all of here this evening therefore to prepare to come to the table next week and to look expectantly for that blessing through faith. But in the mean time, we must saturate ourselves in His Word and pray, for these are the ways He gives us everyday to get the Spirit's blessing.
- e. But one of the other things we must do is not grieve and quench the Spirit's work through unbelief and through sin. We must walk in faith, trusting in the promises of God. And we must turn from our sins: we must keep away from what He warns us against, and we must yield obedience to the commandments.
- f. If we do these things, we will experience His love to an even greater measure, which will in turn strengthen our faith and our hope in His promises. Do you want to experience as much of heaven now on earth as you can? Then seek to be filled with God's Spirit, for He is your down payment of heaven here, and your full reward there. May God be pleased to encourage our hearts this evening to do this. Amen.