

I Corinthians 13:8-13

Love's Greatness

Introduction:

When we think of greatness we sometimes think of people or events. We might say, "That man was a great president". Great Conquerors of the past were considered great; example, Alexander the Great who was born over 300 years before Christ.

Alexander won battle after battle in order to dominate the world. He brought a universal language of Greek to various countries which helped prepare for the writing of the New Testament. By the age of 30 Alexander founded 20 cities that bore his name and he became sad when he had nowhere else to conquer. But we also apply greatness to more than warriors; we apply it in the realms of politics, religion, sports, business and a host of other things.

Seldom do we think of greatness applied to virtue, such as love. This is what the apostle does for us. His focus is upon, "a more excellent way," (I Cor. 12:31) a virtue that is at the top of the list. Love is greater than extraordinary gifts. It is the greatest of all.

I. Unfailing Love – v. 8-11

A. Love never fails

1. Love does not fall or collapse
2. Love needs no repairs – Song of Sol. 8:7

B. Gifts not permanent

1. The certainty of collapsing gifts – "done away" v. 8,10,11
2. *Q. when will they be done away with?*

C. Contrastive words v.9, 10

- Q. When will the partial peaching be done away with?*
1. The New Testament was still incomplete – Jam. 1:25
 2. Some interpret "perfect" as "maturity"
 3. When the believer leaves this life he leaves everything behind. (Paul's child illustration)

II. Now and Then v. 12-13

A. Theology now and then – (mirror illustration)

1. The Gk. "dimly" is the word einigma (our word enigma)
2. Much of the future we do not know

B. A fuller and clearer understanding – "then face to face"

1. Full knowledge but not omniscience – Matt. 11:27; I Tim. 6:16
2. God knows Paul completely – v.12 b.

C. Three Remaining Virtues v. 13

1. "Faith, hope and love"
2. *Q. Does the verb "abide" extend from the present into eternity?*
II Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:24; Gal. 2:20; I Cor. 15:19

Conclusion:

The greatest of these is "love" I John 4:8, 16; Paul singles out love. Why?

1. *Because love is basic because of God's love for His Son and loving His people through His Son's finished work on the cross.*
2. *Because love is fundamental in the divine-human relationship – Eph. 1:5,6*
3. *Because love is a fruit of the Spirit possessed by every Christian displaced for the common good of the church and for a witness to the world - Gal. 5:22-23; John 13:34,35*

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Web Site fultonrpc.org 10/6/2013