

Lesson # 6 -- The Biblical Description of Love.

Introduction

- A. Saint Augustine (354-430) was often caught up in considering the concept of love.

Oh! that I might repose on Thee! Oh! that Thou wouldst enter into my heart and inebriate it, that I may forget my ills and embrace Thee, my sole good. What art Thou to Me? In Thy pity, teach me to utter it. Or what am I to Thee that Thou demandest my love, and, if I give it not, are wroth with me, and threatenest me with grievous woes? Is it then a slight woe to love Thee not? Oh! for Thy mercies' sake, tell me, O Lord my God, what Thou art unto me . . . Narrow is the mansion of my soul, enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest enter in. It is ruinous, repair Thou it. It has that within which must offend Thine eyes, I confess and know it. But who shall cleanse it? or to whom should I cry, save Thee?
(The Confessions of St. Augustine, E. B. Pusey, I, (5),5,6)

- B. All believers echo the cry of Saint Augustine. We are overwhelmed, when we read the Bible, at the meaning of love and that God would love us.
- C. Love is not an option. God commands us to worship Him in love. He exhorts us to receive His love and thereby be enabled to obey Him with personal fulfillment.

I. The Importance of Love.

- A. It is the first commandment -- Matthew 22:34-40.
- B. It is the virtue to be sought above all -- I Cor. 12:31; 13:13; Col. 3:14; I Peter 4:8.
- C. It is the evidence of genuine sonship -- John 13:34,35; I John 3:16-18.
- D. It is a necessary requirement for exercising faith -- Galatians 5:6; I Timothy 1:5.
- E. It is inseparably related to spiritual progress -- John 14:15,21,23,24; I Thess. 4:12,13; I John 4:17-21; 5:3; Revelation 2:4,5.

II. A Provisional Statement Related to the Meaning of Love.

Love is a decision to recognize another person as a person, to give that person rightful place in your life as you take your rightful place in their life, and to give yourself to that person in the context of truth and holiness.

III. A Biblical Background Related to Love.

- A. In his creation man was given the ability to love (Genesis 1:27; 2:24; 3:8). By the exercise of this ability, or function, man was not only acting in obedience to God he was thereby fully manifesting himself (living without reserve, defining his essence) and receiving self-fulfillment.
- B. In the Fall we lost our ability to know that God loved us (at least to experience that love), we lost the ability to love God, to love one another, and to love ourselves. Because of this tragic effect of sin the non-Christian is alienated from God (Eph. 2:12; Col. 1:21), alienated from other members of the race (Rom. 1:29-31; I Cor. 3:3; James 3:14-16; Titus 3:3), and alienated from ourselves (Phil. 2:21; Rom. 1:31; II Tim. 3:2-4; Titus 3:3). The ability-function to love, for the non-Christian, is only a shadow of the created potentiality.
- C. In salvation the ability to love has been restored (Romans 5:5).
- D. In sanctification (the believer's daily life) we are commanded and exhorted to use our ability to love (I John 2:5; 5:3; Jude 21). This is very difficult for the believer to do in that the presence of the old nature within him, the example of the world about him and the pressure of the enemy against him all present barriers to genuine love. There is, however, nothing more important in our daily lives.

IV. Explanatory Principles Regarding Love.

- A. Love is based in the grace of God. It is a response to His love for us -- I John 4:19.
- B. Love is an action -- John 3:16; I John 4:9,10.
- C. Love is an action initiated by a decision -- Deut. 7:7; Jer. 2:2,33; Hosea 3:1; John 14:21,23,24; I Cor. 13:4-7.

- D. Love is highly personal -- it has a person as its object -- Matt. 22:37-39.
 - E. Love is inseparably related to faith and obedience -- Gal. 5:6; I John 5:3.
 - F. Love is an activity of personal self-surrender in the context of truth and holiness -- John 13:34,35; Eph. 5:2; I John 3:16-18.
 - G. Love is an experience and provided for all believers as the will of God -- Ephesians 3:17-19.
 - H. Love is exceedingly practical and must be accepted as such -- I John 3:16-18; 4:16-21.
- 1. God in His love to us --
 - a. Recognizes us as persons -- Malachi 1:2.
 - b. Seeks to take His rightful place in our lives and exhorts us to take our rightful place in His life and plan -- Matt. 10:37-39; 11:28-30; I Thess. 1:3; Rev. 2:4,5.
 - c. Chooses to give of His fullness to us in the relationship of truth and holiness -- John 1:16; Eph. 3:14-21; 4:13-16; Col. 1:19,20.
 - 2. In our love to God, we are to --
 - a. Recognize Him as the Infinite and Perfect Person that He is -- Deut. 7:6-11; Jer. 10:6,10-16; Romans 8:28-39.
 - b. Give Him His rightful place in our lives and seek to take our rightful place in His life and plan -- Eph. 1:16-23; Rom. 12:1,2.
 - c. Choose to give ourselves unreservedly to Him in truth and holiness -- Phil. 3:7-10; Col. 3:1-14