

LESSON NINE

PAUL'S FIRST CORINTHIAN LETTER (Continued)

A. THE CHRISTIAN AND LOVE: (I Corinthians 13).

This chapter is a gem of literature. It has been called "the encyclopedia of love." The English word "charity" does not express the original word "agape." Agape means to love, expecting nothing in return and has its source in God alone (I John 4:8). It is never found in the Greek classics.

There are two Greek words translated "love" in the New Testament. One is "agape," the highest type of love. This is the king of love, which God has for the world. It is a sacrificial love. The other word is "phileo." This lesser type of love is one given in a mutual relationship, where one loves the lovable.

Nowhere in literature can there be found more highly exalted ethics than Paul sets forth in the love chapter. He shows the emptiness and worthlessness of profession without love. Then he outlines its activities until no one need to be left in question of whether or not he possesses it. This love is not a natural acquisition, but is shed abroad in one's heart by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5).

1. THE VALUES OF LOVE: (verses 1-3).

Love is vital. Without love, all other attributes are worthless.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF LOVE: (verses 4-8a).

There is a long list of the virtues and characteristics of love. We shall attempt to name them as they are given in this chapter:

1. longsuffering and kind;
2. doesn't envy;
3. doesn't become rash;
4. is not conceited;
5. is polite and courteous;
6. is unselfish;
7. is not provoked;
8. doesn't keep a ledger of wrongs suffered;
9. doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness;
10. doesn't rejoice in gossip;
11. overlooks all faults;
12. doesn't contain suspicion;
13. optimistic;
14. remains strong through all circumstances.

3. ENDURANCE OF LOVE: (verses 8b-13).

The other gifts will fail for they will end when the church is perfected. These have been given for the edification of the church and when the church is raptured they will have finished the purpose for which they had been given. The gifts of the Spirit will no longer be needed when we are caught up from this world. Love is that which will endure into eternity, and is therefore, the greatest.

B. THE RESURRECTION: (I Corinthians 15).

1. THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION: (verses 1-34).

The question of the resurrection had been raised at Corinth. Apparently, some had believed the teaching of the Sadducees. Materialistic conceptions of the resurrection of the body had led to wrong views of the resurrection. Paul dealt with these errors by insisting on the bodily resurrection of Jesus as a fundamental fact on which the whole gospel rests. Paul argued strongly that except for the hope of the resurrection there is no reason for the existence of Christianity.

We have, in this chapter, three reasons given for the fact of the resurrection: a) We are saved by the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-2). The experiences of the Corinthians were proof to them of the resurrection. We might add that this second verse is a strong proof that the teaching of unconditional eternal security is an error. b) The Scripture bore witness to the reality of the resurrection. c) There were eyewitnesses of his resurrected body. He had been seen at different times by the apostles. Jesus had appeared to a crowd of 500 people at one time. This was some 27 years before this, but half of these 500 were still living. A crowd of this size would not just imagine the same thing. The resurrection had to be a reality. Finally Paul himself was a witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Paul had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus. There could be no other explanation to the phenomenon of Paul's life.

If there be no resurrection of the dead then Jesus did not rise. If Jesus did not rise, then the faith of the Corinthians was in vain and they were still in their sins.

We must note that Christ is the Firstfruits. Even when the graves were opened at his death there was no resurrection of Old Testament saints until after His resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53).

The statement is given in verse 24 that the time will come when Christ's mediatorial reign will have to come to its end and fulfilled its purpose and at that time the office of the Sonship will cease.

There is a problem in verse 29 concerning baptizing by proxy. Whether or not the Corinthians were following some heathen custom here, we are not certain. Certainly Paul did not approve of it if they were doing this. He asked if there was no resurrection, why were they doing it?

A better interpretation for this verse possibly is that the Apostle Paul was referring to the act of baptism and asking the question: Why baptize if Jesus was never raised, for if there was no resurrection then the ordinance loses its meaning. A translation given by Sir. Robert Anderson reads like this: "Else what shall become of them which are being baptized? It is for corpses if the dead rise not." This brings out the thought that if there is no resurrection, baptism is for the sake of the absolutely dead and there is no purpose in it.

2. **THE MANNER AND NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION:** (verses 35-50).

Paul anticipated some questions concerning the nature of the resurrection and answered those questions. He likened the body to the seed that is planted. Each seed has its own body. Just as all these have their own body, so our mortal bodies through death will resurrect with a new body, given by God. It will be a spiritual body. We shall be changed from mortal to immortal. All shall not die, but all shall be changed.

Our hope is not merely immortality of the spirit, but actual resurrection of the body (Romans 8:23, I Thessalonians 5:23, II Corinthians 5:4). It will not be the same corrupt earthly body but a spiritual body partaking of the nature of God's own heavenly glory.

3. **THE FINAL TRIUMPH:** (verses 51-58).

The apostle revealed a mystery of those who have died in the Lord. He describes them as being asleep in Jesus. This is a lovely way to describe the condition of those who have departed from this life: they are asleep in Jesus. To be absent from the body is to present with the Lord. They are waiting to be clothed upon with a new body. The dead are asleep in Jesus: a redeemed spirit without a body, waiting for that moment, the day of resurrection.

Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, the trumpet shall sound. The dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall not be changed. Note that there will be a generation, which will not die, a generation that will not go into the valley of the shadow of death, but they all shall be changed.

There will come a day when the incorruptible spirit shall be reunited again with a body that will put on incorruption. The fate of your soul will also be the fate of your body; the two cannot be separated, eternally. They are separated for a little while, as the body waits for its resurrection, but when Jesus comes, the spirit will be reunited with the body. Death cannot touch the soul or the spirit of a Christian. It touches the body for a short time until the resurrection takes place.

The sting is taken out of death because sin is cancelled. Death is no longer an enemy to the Christian. We may put our foot on the neck of the enemy death and laugh at him: Oh death, where is thy victory? Instead of swallowing us up, death itself will be swallowed up. Instead of casting us into eternal hell, death itself will go there. Because of Calvary, the tables have been turned.

Finally, this victory leaves a challenge with us - a challenge to be steadfast, unmovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

C. POSTSCRIPT: (I Corinthians 16).

1. **THE MATTER OF COLLECTION:**

Paul gave the church instruction concerning receiving offerings to help the church at Jerusalem. Apparently the church at Jerusalem was suffering financial hardships. He was receiving offerings from the Gentile churches for the assistance of the mother church. Paul advised the Corinthians to collect the money on the first day of the week and to choose one to deliver it to Jerusalem. He himself would not do it. Let us note that the church at Corinth assembled on the first day of the week.

2. FINAL EXHORTATIONS:

In the chapter we have Paul giving the Corinthians many final exhortations. He exhorts them: watch, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, and be strong. Let all things be done with love.

Paul told them concerning his plans to visit Corinth. He said that he would pass through Macedonia and possibly spend the winter with them.

It is possible that the Corinthians had asked Apollos to come to Corinth but he had refused to go at that time. It is probable that this was due to the fact that certain Corinthians desired to make him a leader.

It is quite possible that this letter had been written by Sosthenes (I Corinthians 1:1), at Paul's dictation, and Paul signed it with his own hand (I Corinthians 16:21). He may have added the next verse: *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."* This verse 22 contains a very serious message and tells us what the option is if we love not Jesus. It is to be cursed with a very serious judgment for the Lord cometh.

LESSON NINE

SELF HELP TEST

A. Define clearly the difference between "agape" and "phileo" love.

B. List ten virtues of love:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

C. Give the order of the resurrection:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

D. List the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

E. Explain I Corinthians 15:24.

F. Explain: Anathema Maranatha.