

## Love

Love is a defining quality. The Bible teaches that all believers will love. "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20 NKJV)

### *Love Defined*

To define love we begin with the Scriptures where love is defined by its actions. "Love suffers long [and] is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV)

Of course, the true test of our love is not measured by our actions towards those who love us, but when we consider how we love those who are our enemies. "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46 NKJV)

Therefore, we must ask, how do I respond to my enemies? The answer to that question will tell us if we are practicing love. However, we need to know more than are we or aren't we loving. We need to look at the root to understand where our sin or where our successes originate.

### *Love's Root*

A brief consideration of the list of actions in the verse above will tell us that love is sacrificial. It suffers and is kind, does not envy and so forth. That is not to say that love does nothing when faced with the sins of others. Bearing all things and believing all things does not mean love is naïve.

However, as was said above the primary quality of love is sacrifice. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13 NKJV)

Jesus clearly loved us beyond what we can imagine. However, there is something even greater than this. Jesus love for us brings glory to God. Jesus spoke the following words after Judas left the supper to betray Him. "So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately." (John 13:31-32 NKJV) Of course, he was referring to His redemptive work, the cross, and all that was associated with it.

Here is where we find our help. We can love because it glorifies our Father. When we react to our enemies with kindness, when we are able to pray for them, it is because we have God's glory as our ultimate goal. That happens when we understand the human condition and nature of grace.

Had God not loved us when we were sinners, we would surely perish in our sins. However, God did love us when we were sinners and gave us an example to follow. As we look at that example, we are overwhelmed by His grace and compelled to follow Him. What man can look at another through the blood of the cross and say he is not as worthy of salvation? I don't believe it is possible for one to do so if they see their own sins lain on the back of Jesus. Understanding that you only stand by the grace of God will change the way you treat your enemies. You will want to glorify the Father because He deserves to be glorified. Therefore, the root of love is love. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." (1 John 4:10-11 NKJV)