

THE GREATEST THING IN ALL THE WORLD

(Romans 12:9)

...I hope that you celebrated Valentine's Day last Thursday. It is a special day for us to express our love to those who are dear to us.

...Today, we hear a lot about LOVE. Much of it falls far short of God's love. Often it is usually selfish and sensual.

...Paul unfolded the Gospel to the Romans, and then told how it works out in the lives of those who truly possess it. First we worship the Lord. (vv1-2) Then we humble ourselves before Him and others (v.3) Next we use the gifts God gave us to be a blessing to the church and to others. (vv4-8) After these, Paul tells of the wonderful love of God that will shine brightly through us to others. (This is the 2nd Great Commandment!)

TWO CONSIDERATIONS DESCRIBING THE LOVE THAT OUGHT TO BE EXPRESSED IN YOUR DAILY LIVING.

...If you possess the Gospel, your new nature will express this love to others! "The greatest of these is love."

I. We Are To Love Others With A Genuine Sincerity, Without Pretense. (v. 9)

- A. Paul uses the word "agape," which is the word that describes God's love. This is not a mere sentimental emotion, it is doing what is best for the one who is loved.
- B. Paul tells two specific things about this love:
 1. It is a genuine love. "sincere." (NIV)
 - ...Pottery stamped with "sine cera." It was not inferior, undoctored ceramics...
 - ...The Greek word "without a mask." In Greek theater an actor wore a mask...
 - ...We are to love truly and genuinely. We are not to role play.
 - ..."get off the stage and drop our masks."
 - ...4 Greek words used for love in ancient Greece: stage...eros...philia...agape....
 - ...It is this God-like love we are to have for other people.
 2. It is a discerning love. "hating and clinging to" These words describe this love.
 - a. We are to hate evil. It is almost shocking to have this follow...love.
 - ...we are to "love" then "hate." Love must discriminate. Real love does not love everything. It sees evil as the destroyer of real love. God is love, yet He hates: Proverbs 6:16-19 ...7 things He hates.
 - b. We must keep clinging (glue) to the good. Love the truth, the pure, etc.

II. We Are Given A Beautiful Picture Of This Love. (1 Corinthians 13)

...Here Paul gives us 15 wonderful qualities of this agape love...God's love put within us.

- A. Love is PATIENT. People are difficult/exasperating/slow...love understands this and is patient.
 - ...We remember God's patient love with us...
- B. Love is KIND. Our world is filled with hurting people. Love does what it can to help, serve, etc.
 - ...it is quick to speak an encouraging word. Quick to offer a hand...
- C. Love does not ENVY. (The next 8 are negative, telling what love does not do.) It is not jealous.
 - ...it is glad when others win honor. . Because...there is contentment with the life God has given.
- D. Love does not BOAST. It does not call attention to oneself.
- E. Love is not PROUD. It is humble. No inflated ideas of oneself.
- F. Love is not RUDE. It is courteous. Good manners. Love listens. It does not dominate...
- G. Love is not SELF-SEEKING. Does ask, "what's in it for me?" It thinks of the one it loves.
- H. Love is not EASILY ANGERED. Anger destroys. It destroys marriages, families, and churches.
- I. Love keeps no RECORDS of WRONGS. Love forgets all wrongs. It is not resentful, vindictive.
- J. Love does not DELIGHT IN EVIL. Love hates wickedness. Not amused by wrong doing...TV.
- K. Love rejoices with the TRUTH. Love tells the truth, loves the righteous...
- L. Love always PROTECTS. It covers. It sides with the weak, the hurting, the slandered...
- M. Love always TRUSTS. Love is never suspicious. Not stupid, always thinks the best.
- N. Love always HOPES. It does not stop loving because it is not loved in return...always forgives.
- O. Love always PERSEVERES. It never gives up. It is indomitable!!! It outlasts hate and evil...

...JESUS is the personification of this love. So should we be if we own Him as our Savior. Love is the greatest thing in all of our fallen, selfish, death bound world. This is God's work with you.

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: