

DO YOU LOVE THE CHURCH?

The above question almost seems to be a ridiculous one. The reason why it seems ridiculous is that if you are a Christian, the church is made up of many "yous". The one body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4) consist of all the individual members. Paul wrote, "For the body is not one member, but many...But now are they many members, yet but one body" (I Cor. 12:14, 20). It's almost like saying I don't love the Jones family when you are one of the Jones family. Yet, it is not unusual to hear someone say something to the effect that they love the Lord but do not think the church is all that important.

Another important part of answering the above question is seen in the price that was paid for the church. Paul said concerning the church of Christ, "which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Paul also tells us the motivating factor for paying that purchase price. He said, "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). One cannot separate Christ and His church. The church is His body and He is the builder of it (Matt. 16:18), the head of it (Eph. 1:22) and the purchaser of it (Acts 20:28). That being the case, one cannot love Christ and not love His church.

Now, what is the ramifications of not properly loving the church? Such a lack of love for the church will manifest itself in a failure to financially support the work of the church. Such support is not only commanded, but it is also commanded that it be given cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7). How can the church grow and function properly without the necessary funds? Another manifestation of a lack of love for the church is seen in haphazard attendance to the functions of the church; the Bible studies, worship services and gospel meetings. This failure leads to discouragement on the part of some of the members and a sign of apathy for those who are not members. And then also, a lack of love for the church will manifest itself in a failure to "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). It takes the spread of the gospel to make Christians and Christians to make up the church in any location. No teaching of the word results in no numerical church growth. The elderly will die and the church in any location will die also, minus active evangelism on the part of it's members.

Let's face it. Without a love for Christ one can't be saved. Without a love for the church, one can't have a love for Christ. Got it? *Titlis*

THE BASICS OF LOVE

The word of God instructs and commands that we love. We are commanded to love God, to love truth, to love the brethren, to love our spouse, to love our children and even to love our enemies. Volumes have been written by numerous authors on the subject of love. Since it is such a prominent subject in God's word, we wish to note a few basic truths about the subject for the word itself. These basic truths apply no matter the specific love, whether one's love for God or their love for their spouse. It is true that love of specific recipients does require certain attributes that love of some other recipient does not require. For instance, love for the Lord requires obedience to the commandments of the Lord (John 14:15) when obviously love for our child does not require us to obey that child. Love for a spouse will require certain intimacies that one would certainly not bestow upon one's enemies.

Though love is an emotion, interestingly enough, love is something that can be taught. Paul told Titus to teach young women to love their husbands and to love their children (Tit. 2:4). There are therefore obviously some basics of love that need to be passed along. We might begin by understanding that love is not something one says, but something one does. John wrote, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18). Just saying that one loves God or man is not the same as actually loving God or man. This is much like being baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19) is not something that is said, but something that is done. As the old saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding".

Space will not allow application of each individual point, but one is encouraged to read I Corinthians, chapter thirteen and notice specifically verses four through six. Keep in mind that the word "charity" is the same as is usually translated "love". The American Standard version reads, "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with truth". Now, just substitute your name in each place where the word "love" is found and read it again. If you can honestly read it with your name in the place of "love", in reference to any specific love you have in mind, then you really have mastered the basics of love.

Tilis