

Ralph Woodrow
Evangelistic Association
PO Box 21
Palm Springs, CA 92263

DIVINE LOVE

The word “love” carries different meanings to different people. There is sweetheart love, a mother’s love for her child, love for humanity, etc. But *God’s* love is far more lasting and deeper than any of these. It is more than mere “puppy love”—puppy love might lead you a dog’s life! The love about which we are speaking is *divine love*—“the LOVE that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5).



In this article, it will be shown that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are important. It will be shown that a good understanding of biblical doctrine is important. It will be shown that faith and hope are important. “But the **greatest** of these is LOVE” (1 Cor. 13:13).

God’s LOVE is “*everlasting love*” and his kindness “*unfailing*” (Jer. 31:3). *Nothing* in all creation—neither death, life, angels, nor present or future things—can separate us from the LOVE of God (Rom. 8:38, 39). “For God so LOVED the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

***Could we with ink the ocean fill
and were the skies of parchment made,
were every stalk on earth a quill
and every man a scribe by trade,
to write the LOVE of God above
would drain the ocean dry;
nor could the scroll contain the whole,
tho' stretched from sky to sky.***

The Psalmist spoke of God’s “lovingkindness and tender mercies,” that He is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive...nor will *He keep His anger forever*” (Psa. 103:4-9).

Then in verse 12 we read: “As far as the EAST is from the WEST, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” How far is this? The surface distance between the South Pole and the North Pole can be measured. It is about **12,430** miles. But “as far as the east is from the west” is without measure. East and west have no meeting point. In other words, because of God’s love, our sins are totally *gone*! In the words of an old gospel song:

***Gone, gone, gone, gone, yes, my sins are gone.
Now my soul is free and in my heart’s a song;
Buried in the deepest sea,
Praise God! My sins are G-O-N-E, gone!***

“Greater LOVE has no man than this...to lay down one’s life for his FRIENDS” (John 15:13). Man’s love can be **no greater**. But Christ’s love was **greater**: He died for His ENEMIES!



**MOUNT SAN JACINTO RISES MAJESTICALLY FROM DOWNTOWN
PALM SPRINGS TO AN ELEVATION OF 10,834 FEET.**

Enlarging, as it were, on this statement, Paul wrote it would be unlikely—“yet *perhaps* for a good man someone would even dare to die.” But then notice the striking **contrast**:

“Christ died for the UNGODLY...God demonstrated His own LOVE toward us, in that while we were still SINNERS, Christ died for us...when we were ENEMIES we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:7-10).

We, *today*, look back about **2,000** years to the time when Christ died. But when Paul penned these words, only about **24** years had passed since the death of Christ. So, when Paul said, “*while* we were still sinners,” in his case, that recent time element was literally true!

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to LOVE one another” (1 John 4:9-11).

Jesus said to His disciples, “LOVE one another. By **this** all will know that you are My disciples, if you have LOVE for one another” (John 13:34, 35).

Jesus did not say all would recognize His disciples because they go by a certain name, meet in a certain kind of building, or because they have headquarters in a certain place. Jesus did not say all men would recognize them because they ascribed to a certain set of doctrines, for the world (in general) knows little about fine points of doctrine. But by demonstrating a life of love—God’s love—the people of God can be recognized.

Not only is this love a sign to the world, it is a witness to our own hearts that we are Christians! “*We know* we have passed from death to life, *because* we LOVE the brethren” (1 John 3:16). Do you wonder if you are really a Christian? If you are, you will love the brethren.

***Bind us together, Lord
Bind us together
With cords that cannot be broken
Bind us together in LOVE.***

Without this love, we are *liars* and *murderers* in the sight of God! Strong words, but totally biblical: “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). “Whoever hates his brother is a MURDERER, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

People who do not have love certainly do not have the Spirit of God, for “God *is* LOVE” (1 John 4:16). The Spirit of God in our hearts will cause us to love the brethren—all who have repented of their sins and turned to Jesus Christ. They may not



understand every doctrine exactly the same, but this does not mean they are not brothers.

Suppose two brothers were discussing mathematics—one a college student, the other a fifth grader. How foolish it would be for the college student to argue with his younger brother about geometry! Certainly, they would not understand mathematics the same. But they are brothers—they have the *same father*!

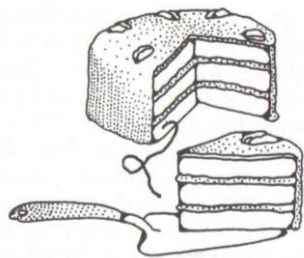
So it is within the family of our Heavenly Father. Some are “babes” in Christ, while others are more mature (1 Peter 2:2; Heb. 5:13,14). If we understand some truth our brother does not yet understand, we should be humble and loving, bearing in mind that “knowledge puffs up, but LOVE edifies” (1 Cor. 8:1).

This LOVE message is not a watered down, sugarcoated message. It is strong meat. It puts demands on us. So intense should be our love for the brethren, that as Christ “laid down His life for us... we also ought to *lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3:16). Strong words indeed!

Some love the “brethren” as long as they belong to the same denomination. But in some cases—even right in the same denomination and local assembly—love for the brethren comes up short. Churches have split over such petty things as who is going to play the piano—or even if they should allow a piano!

I know of a group that believed in taking the Lord’s Supper and having a foot washing service once a year—at Passover time—but split because they could not agree on which came first. Should they have the foot washing first, **then** take the Lord’s Supper—or take the Lord’s Supper first, **then** wash feet? The whole issue hinged on an interpretation of the phrase: “And supper being *ended* [finished]” (John 13:2). Did this mean that supper was finished, so they were now ready to eat; or did it mean they were finished with supper?

A story (probably a made-up story to make a point) is told about a church that even split on a hair! Different ladies in the church baked cakes for a young visiting preacher. Later he thanked them for the cakes, but added that one cake had a long hair in it. Each claimed it wasn’t her cake. Some thought it was Sister Smith’s cake and others felt it was Sister Jones’ cake. Finally, people took sides and (according to the story) the church split—*split on a hair*!



I once observed two preachers discussing—well, really, *arguing*—about the “Rapture”! To a bystander it would appear they were really getting worked up about it. Based on their assumption there would be a final seven-year Tribulation Period, one was “Pre-Trib,” the other was “Post-Trib”—each accusing the other of being *wrong*!

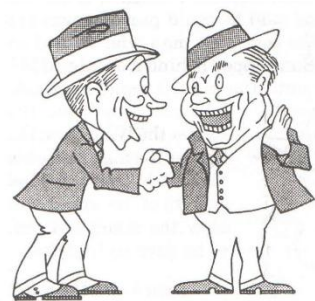
Which one do *I* think was wrong? I would say they were both wrong if they allowed a doctrinal difference like this to mar their love for one another as brothers in Christ!

This is not to say that we should not study out a matter; this is not to say we should not take a stand for truth as we come to see

it in the Scriptures; but we must “speak the truth in LOVE” (Eph. 4:15). Our priorities must be right.

“Behold, how *good* and how *pleasant* it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1).

All Christians agree on more things than they disagree on. If it is necessary to *disagree*, we need not be *disagreeable*. According to Romans 14, emphasis should be on *accepting*—not *rejecting*—one another. Generally speaking, **cooperation** is more fruitful than **confrontation**. Our ship should be **The Fellowship**, not the **Battleship**.



As a young preacher, I knew a wonderful woman who regarded me like one of her family. Years later, as had been her request, I conducted her funeral. She loved God, and wanted to know the Bible truth about EVERYTHING. In the process, she was pulled many directions. She received stacks of literature from a variety of churches and ministries. But all the conflicting doctrines she encountered, instead of bringing peace, tended to *rob* her of peace!

How should we explain the book of Revelation? Where is the United States in Bible prophecy? Are the Jews God’s chosen people? How should we explain the Trinity? Should we vote? Should we salute the flag? What about blood transfusions or eating pork? Will the saved go to Heaven, or live forever on a New Earth? How should one be baptized?

How should the Sacred Name be pronounced? Which translation of the Bible is right? Are the gifts of the Spirit, like speaking in tongues and healing, for us today? Which church is the one true Church? Should Christians meet for worship on Sunday or Saturday? Should Christians observe the Jewish Feast Days? What about Easter, Christmas, and birthday celebrations—are they “pagan”?

And the time would fail me to tell of the Rapture, Tribulation, Millennium, three days and nights, women’s head coverings, Jewish calendar, predestination, the state of the dead, spirits in prison, Hell, the curse on Ham, Sons of God looking on daughters of men, Seed of the Serpent, a pre-Adamic earth, age of the earth, dinosaurs, fossils, etc., etc.!

There is nothing wrong with studying these things. I have written articles on some of them. But LOVE surpasses them all! Paul said if he had *all* knowledge so that he could understand *all* mysteries, without LOVE, “I am NOTHING” (1 Cor. 13:2).

Though it is a short verse—only *four* words—it is powerful: “Let *brotherly* LOVE continue” (Heb. 13:1).

Philadelphia, the famous city in Pennsylvania, means “**brotherly love**” in Greek: *phileo* (love) and *adelphos* (brother). Philadelphia was founded in 1682 by William Penn as a place where freedom of religion could be practiced without facing hate or harm. He, consequently, chose the name Philadelphia (brotherly love) from Revelation 3:7.

The Bible repeatedly stresses forgiveness, kindness, mercy, and tenderness—love qualities that are often lost in a maze of doctrines and religious dogmas. “And ABOVE ALL THINGS have fervent LOVE for one another” (1 Peter 4:8). “Put on tender

mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering....But ABOVE ALL THESE THINGS put on LOVE” (Col. 3:12-14).

Writing to believers at Corinth, Paul mentioned supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit—wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in other tongues, and interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:8-10). Such were wonderful and to be desired. But then he continued: “Yet I show you A MORE EXCELLENT WAY” (verse 31). The LOVE Chapter follows!

Paul said he prayed in the Spirit and with the understanding also. He sang in the Spirit and with the understanding also. And he even declared: “I thank my God I speak with tongues *more than you all*” (1 Cor. 14:14-18). But he also said: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not LOVE, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

Writing to believers in Ephesus, Paul said: “Husbands, LOVE your wives” (Eph. 5:25). The fact that he wrote these words clearly implies there was a **need** for this admonition. Some husbands were unloving—were not treating their wives right. Peter made the same point, that if a husband does not lovingly honor his wife, *even his prayers can be hindered!* (1 Peter 3:7).

A couple that had been married for quite a few years went to a pastor for counselling. The wife felt her husband didn’t love her any more. “Do you ever tell your wife you love her?” the pastor asked. “Yep,” the man replied. “When me and the Mrs. got married, I told her *then*—it still holds!” Couples should not hesitate to say it: “I love you.”



A story is told of a pastor who was so busy serving the church, he paid little attention to his wife. She became depressed and he took her to a doctor. The doctor asked her: “When was the last time your husband gave you a big hug?” It had been quite a while. “When was the last time he kissed you?” Same answer.

With this the doctor grabbed her, leaned her back, and gave her a great big hug and kiss. He then turned to the husband and said: “She needs this *every day!*”

The pastor replied: “Doc, I’m a busy man. I have a tight schedule. But I guess I could bring her in on Tuesdays and Thursdays!”

So: the Bible speaks of love between husband and wife, love for mankind, and love among the brethren. **But it does not stop there!** Jesus even said to LOVE our ENEMIES! “LOVE your **enemies**, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who spitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:43-48). Love like this surely requires a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts!



There are people who become hateful and angry, sometimes even over little things. “Let **all** bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (Eph. 4:31, 32). God’s love in our hearts makes us BETTER, not BITTER!

If we have the love of God, we will not make fun of others because of some handicap or problem they have. How often children at school will make fun of others because they are “fat,” or “skinny,” because of the color of their skin, or if they stutter, or have a deformity or because they are poor. Such bullying is cruel and detestable. Older people—though usually in more subtle ways—often show the same lack of consideration.

If we have Christian love, we will not only be kind to *people*, but also to *animals*. I have often pointed this out—it is a “pet doctrine” with me.

I once read a newspaper article about a woman who was walking her dog along an irrigation canal. The dog ran on ahead to where some youngsters were playing in the water. They grabbed the little dog and drowned it—before the woman could get there. Then they ran off laughing. Such cruelty shows how badly this world needs LOVE!



Some will not properly feed or care for their animals. Even the Bible makes provision for the oxen that tread out the grain. They are not to be muzzled—but left free to eat while working (Deut. 25:4). “A good man is concerned for the welfare of his animals” (Pro. 12:10 LBT).

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people were very strict about not doing any labor on the Sabbath. But **they** even made an exception for an animal that was in distress. “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 14:5).

A comedy movie years ago was titled *Francis the Talking Mule*. Later, a television series featured a talking horse: *Mr. Ed*.

No connection—but it may be of some interest to mention that the Hebrew word ED means “witness.” The Reubenites and the Gadites “called the altar ED, for it shall be a witness between us that the LORD is God” (Josh. 22:34 KJV). It is unclear why the King James translators left ED untranslated in this *one* verse, but in all 69 other references, used the word “witness.”

Long before anyone ever heard of Mr. Ed or Francis the talking mule, there was the biblical account of Baalam’s donkey that was given the ability to speak temporarily—long enough to ask the wayward prophet why he was treating her *unkindly!* (Num. 22:28).

How many commandments were there in the Old Testament law? Jewish rabbis spoke of **613**. It was sometimes debated which one of these was the greatest. When Jesus was asked about this, he replied:

“You shall LOVE the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”—a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:5. “This,” He explained, “is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself’”—a quotation from Leviticus 19:18. Interestingly, neither of these commandments Jesus cited was quoted from the Ten Commandments.

“On these two commandments hang **all** the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:35-46). In other words, the basis for God’s entire program is LOVE!

During a time when testimonies are given, the opening words of Psalms 116:1 provide a good starting point: “I LOVE the LORD,

because... This was John's testimony: "We LOVE Him **because** He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Some folks are like a woman who stood in church and testified, "I love everybody I SEE." But she had her eyes *closed* the whole time!

A Christian can demonstrate love in the way he drives on the highway. He will drive safely and never engage in road rage. He will sacrifice a few seconds of his time, to let a car move over, showing kindness and courtesy.



A minister friend of mine told me about a man who saw a bumper sticker on the car in front of him that said: "Honk if you love Jesus!" As he passed, he honked. The man frowned at him and gave him an obscene finger gesture!

Some who buy a product will run it down, down, down, to the one who is selling it (without any real reason), until it is purchased for a low price—then *boast* about it. "It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer—then goes off and boasts about the purchase" (Pro. 20:14 NIV). Two-faced hypocrisy like this is not love.

"Variance" is listed by Paul as a work of the flesh, contrary to "LOVE" which is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). Have you ever known people who practice **variance**? No matter what someone says, they seem to have a different opinion. One person might say an item cost \$2.98. The other will interrupt, saying it cost \$2.88, even though this minor difference is not essential to the overall point. Variance causes people to be different *and* difficult!

A Christian man told me once: "I never leave a very big tip for the waitress at a restaurant, but I do leave her a gospel tract!" That would be all the more reason to leave a good tip.

Jesus—using what has been described as "high voltage vocabulary"—spoke about the hypocrisy of one trying to take a "mote" out of his brother's eye, while having a "beam" in his own (Matt. 7:3-5 KJV). Put in modern terms, the question might be: "Why do you try to take a *speck* of sawdust out of your brother's eye, when you have a *telephone pole* in your own?"

There is a story about a woman who used to look out her window at her neighbor's wash hanging on the clothesline. Each week she would say, "My! Those sheets look so dirty. That woman never gets her wash clean!"

But one day she washed her own windows. Next Monday the neighbor's wash looked perfectly white! All she needed to do was wash her *own* windows!



It has been a long time since I heard this song, one that was often sung by gospel quartets:

*Nearer to thee, O Lord I want to be,
I want to dig a little deeper in the storehouse of your LOVE
I want to shine with LOVE sublime.
I want to walk a little more like Jesus would
I want to talk a little more like a Christian should,
I want to dig a little deeper in the storehouse of your LOVE*

May this be our prayer!

10/2026

"LOVE is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (First Corinthians 13:4-7 MNT).

Help someone,
even if you know they can
never help you back.



RALPH WOODROW
PO BOX 21
PALM SPRINGS, CA 92263

E-mail: ralphwoodrow21@gmail.com
Phone: (760) 327-6049
Website: ralphwoodrow.org