

A MOST EXCELLENT WAY

Many miraculous powers were distributed among brethren in the first century (1 Cor. 12:7-10). Although Paul recognized the important place these gifts filled in those early days of the church, he nevertheless touted a way that is superior to all of those spectacular gifts: "And moreover a most excellent way show I unto you" (v. 31b). He then observes that, although one might possess various miraculous gifts, engage in great generosity, or even become a martyr, if he has not love, these activities are vain and will profit one nothing at all (13:1-3).

Paul then proceeds to personify this "most excellent way" in the next few verses (13:4-8):

- **Love suffereth long.** Love makes us patient with others even as God is with us. One who loves is slow to bitterness or anger when wronged.
- **Love is kind.** There is a sweetness to the spirit of the loving person. Graciousness and gentleness in word and deed are products of love.
- **Love envieth not.** A loving person neither desires nor begrudges what others have. Love makes us rejoice in the good fortune of others.
- **Love is not puffed up.** Even the arrogant despise conceit and arrogance in others. A loving person doesn't throw his weight around in assumed self-importance.
- **Love doth not behave itself unseemly.** Love for others keeps us from being rude and crude. Tasteful, well-mannered words and deeds demonstrate love.
- **Love seeketh not its own.** Love doesn't let us dwell only on our rights and what people owe us. A person who is always insisting on his own way and who is always complaining of mistreatment is simply deficient in love.
- **Love is not provoked.** The person who is irritable and has a hair-trigger temper has a love problem. He may be "moody," but Paul calls him unloving.
- **Love taketh not account of evil.** When love controls, we don't store up wrongs suffered.
- **Love rejoiceth not in unrighteousness.** When we love, we mourn at ill reports of the sins and failures of others.
- **Love rejoiceth with the Truth.** Some don't want the Truth to prevail, or they don't want to hear the Truth. Love makes us glad when Truth is victorious, even when it offends some.
- **Love beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things.** Love causes us to keep going in face of burden and insult, trusting in the face of doubts, hoping though discouraged, and triumphantly persevering whatever may come.

We are not surprised at Paul's conclusion: "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and **the greatest of these is love**" (v. 13).

—Dub McClish
Denton, TX