

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT

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MISSIONARY

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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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WHAT IS THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD?

I have a text that answers this question, but I will wait till the end of this writing to give it. What would your answer be to this question? Solomon thought wisdom was the greatest thing. Judging from actions, which speak louder than words, most people think money is the greatest. What a mad scramble there is for money! Our Lord intimated that money is the god of many when he said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

But let us dismiss material possessions and consider human qualities--gifts and talents--the ability to do things. What is the greatest quality or virtue of a human soul? What is the greatest and sublimest thing possible for a human being? What is the greatest gift or talent one can possess? Some would say eloquence is the greatest gift and would point to the power of the orator to sway the crowds and get followers for himself. Some would say knowledge or an education is the greatest,

and would illustrate in many ways the value of an education. But Paul says knowledge, of itself, puffeth up and makes a man proud. And some would say faith is the greatest thing and would refer to words of Christ when He spoke about faith removing mountains. And others would say that charity or benevolence is the greatest thing, and would talk about the gifts of men like Rockefeller, Carnegie, and others. And still others would say that liberty or freedom of spirit is the greatest thing and would speak dramatically of slavery and poverty in the conquered countries of Europe. Now I would not minimize the value of the things I have mentioned, but I must declare that none of them or all of them combined is the greatest thing in the world.



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
- Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
- Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

Nursery Provided

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THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD IS "LOVE." But we must distinguish among the objects of love. All love is not proper and good. We are not to love the world neither the things of the world. The greatest grace or gift is the ability to love God. God is the supreme good and to love Him is to love the greatest and the purest and the best. The Ten Commandments defines our duties to God and man; the word "love" is not in them but the doctrine of love is. Christ, in interpreting the Ten Commandments, says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Love is the greatest thing because, as Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). If a man loves God, he will have no other gods before Him, and he will not take the name of God in vain. If a man loves his neighbour, he will not take his life or his property or his good name. The measure in which we keep His commandments is the measure of our love to Him and to our fellow man.

THE CAUSE OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD. Some men love God; others do not. All saints love Him. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Why do men love God? Whence cometh this love for God, the things of God and the people of God?

1. It is not natural. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it" (Jeremiah 17:9). All men ought to love God, but it is a patent fact that none in his natural state does love God.

2. The efficient cause of love for God is the regenerating Spirit. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (I John 4:7). Every lover of God has the Holy Spirit to thank for a heart that loves God.

3. The instrumental cause is the Gospel through which we learn of His love for us. There can be no love for God apart from the Gospel, because apart from the Gospel we cannot know His love for sinners. We love Him because He first loved us. The Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad in our hearts by opening our eyes to see and appropriate His love for us. He pours His love into our hearts by causing us to meditate upon His love for us.

MARKS OF LOVE TO GOD. How can we know whether we love God or not? This is a momentous question, for if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be accursed when the Lord comes.

1. Love to God will be evidenced to the believer in thoughts about God. If you do not like to think of God, you may well doubt that you love Him. Does the husband love his wife whose mind is continually on other women with scarcely a thought for her? We have two kinds of thoughts: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary thoughts are produced by certain occasions or circumstances. When you go to church the sermon will cause you to have some thoughts of God. But what are your thoughts when alone--involuntary thoughts which spring up of

themselves? These involuntary thoughts come from an inward fountain and reveal the condition of the heart towards God. If you love God you will think upon Him with a sort of intuition. It is the most natural thing for us to think about those we love. "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, while I meditate upon thee in the night watches." "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God."

2. Love to God will manifest itself in a desire to know more about Him and His word. Opportunities for an increased knowledge of God will not be habitually neglected. "Oh, how I love thy word! in it is my meditation all the day." Psalms 42:1 says, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" (Psalms 27:4). A neglected Bible is a bad sign. And those who cannot read well should all the more avail themselves of an oral and public ministry where the word is taught.

3. Love to God will reveal itself in love to the people of God. There will be a desire for fellowship with those of like precious faith. I John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

4. Love to God will show itself in obedience to his commands. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). He who ignores or treats lightly our Lord's commands certainly lacks an essential mark of love to God.

5. Love to God will be manifested in giving to support His cause in the world. Love is expensive. Great love means sacrificial giving. Great love exhausts its resources on its object. When a boy falls in love with a girl, he begins to spend money on her. If he is poor he makes sacrifices--he does without things that he may buy for her. If he is stingy and never spends any money on her, he will never convince her of his love by mere talk. "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (II Corinthians 8:8).

The story is told of a 51 year old widow in Oklahoma City who was told by her doctor that because of a heart ailment she had only one year to live. She had worked hard and had saved some money. When she learned of her fate she set aside \$10,000 to spend on herself in search of happiness. She asked for advice on how she might spend the money. She was told to travel, but she did not like to travel. She was told to buy a new house and a new car, but she said the ones she had were good enough. She was told to go in for night life and "live it up." But she said that when she gambled she always won. Poor deluded woman! And how typical of multitudes who have much to live ON, but nothing to live FOR: no worthy motive and objective in life.

When a Christian professes he has something that will make a man better--something that will fill a man with new desires, new hopes and new joys--some-

thing that will make one different from his former self, it is quite fair for the world to ask: "Is this so? Has it changed your life? Is your life a working model of Christianity?" The greatest motive any believer can have is to so live that the world will have to admit that there is something to the religion of Jesus Christ.

Our original question was, "What is the greatest thing in the world?" The answer to this question is found in I Corinthians 13:13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (or love).

——By the late C. D. Cole