

## ***LOVE – A DEFINING TRAIT***

Lots of people talk about love, but often it is not a “biblical love.” God’s love defines the people of God. God’s love is in keeping with holiness. It is a HOLY LOVE. The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

### ***A LOVE OF THE BRETHREN:***

King Jesus will one day say to the blessed, “inherit the kingdom prepared for you” (Mt. 25:34) and these blessed will be those who cared for His brethren. Jesus says, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40). In John 13:35, Jesus says, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” In 1 John 3:14, the Apostle John says, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.”

True saving faith manifests itself in love. Paul in Galatians 5:6 says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” It is true FAITH that avails and it is this kind of faith that works through love. This is an important qualifier.

### ***A LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE, EVEN OUR ENEMIES:***

Jesus says, “love your enemies...that you may be sons of Your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:44-45). After quoting the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, a lawyer challenged Jesus, saying, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus then gave the parable of the good Samaritan (cf. Lk. 10:25-37). Paul says, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” (Rom. 12:14)

The fruit of the Spirit is first and foremost LOVE and then all the fruit of the Spirit essentially flows out of this (Gal. 5:22-23). In 1 John 4:7-8 the apostle says, “everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Love for God, His people, and for all people are acid tests of a saving faith! “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” (1 Jn. 3:14) True Christ-like love is other-centered and not self-serving. True love seeks the other person’s highest good.

### ***A CONCERN FOR THE LOST:***

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (Jn. 3:16). As God’s people we are called to have this same love in reaching out to the

lost. Jesus told Peter and Andrew, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Mt. 4:19). After His resurrection Christ said ALL authority is given to Him and then commissioned His disciples saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (Mt. 28:18-20).

In Acts 1:8 Jesus explained that He would send the Holy Spirit to empower His people to be "witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." God's love for us was demonstrated "in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And now the love of God "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Paul said of his countrymen, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1). God has now given to His people "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18 – 6:2).

**"Have you **no** wish for others to be **saved**? Then you're **not saved yourself**, be **sure** of that!"- Charles Spurgeon**

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