

## Things Eternal – Part 3

We have looked at seven eternal things that are described for us many times in the Bible: an infinite God, the Word of God, Salvation, Life, Inheritance, Glory, and Fire. There are several other eternal topics in the Bible. For now, let us look at Eternal Love.

In the great chapter written by Paul about love, we find these words. *"But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love"* (1 Corinthians 13:13). What is there about love that makes it greater than faith and hope? In verse 10, Paul said that *"the partial will be done away."* Faith and hope are not complete and will fade away when we see Jesus and the Father face-to-face. The reality of that perfect knowledge will not remove or replace love but will enhance love. God's love for mankind began before creation, became a living example in His Son, and will endure throughout an infinitely long stay in heaven.

When a new baby is born, the whole family gathers around. One of the first discussions to occur is, "who does the baby look like?" Mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, and the rest, all want the baby to look like them. The reason for this reaction is identified by a term Paul used in Romans 12:10. They are kindly affectionate (NKJV), devoted to one another (NASB), and to use a literal translation, the family displays "natural affection." Within the human family, there is an inherent affection for people and animals weaker than ourselves. The tender care given to orphaned creatures, newborn babies, and the elderly is seen in children and all people who have not driven the knowledge and love of God from their hearts.

Consider the God who created man. He said, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness"* (Genesis 1:26). Unlike a proud human parent that wants their child to be like them, the eternal Father created humankind, you and I, in His image. And there, with God the Father, are His Son and The Holy Spirit. And God said, "It is Good." The Love of God, present before creation, created humans to receive a continuous stream of gifts of love throughout history. The earth, providing everything to feed, clothe, and shelter His children, proves His love. Jesus told the woman at Jacob's well that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). And since we are like Him, having a spirit within us, God has also made complete provisions for our spiritual well being. *"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).

We gain an insight into the full depth of God's love when we read Matthew 5:43-48. *"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

Part of God's love for us is the discipline necessary to correct imperfections in behavior (to use a textbook term). The Hebrew writer reminds readers of Solomon's Proverb. *"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights"* (Proverbs 3:11-12). The writer continues in Hebrews 12:5-9, *"If you*

*endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?"* Jesus did not sin and, therefore, was not punished. But to learn what it was like to be human to better mediate for us, The Father disciplined His Son. *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8). We also have God's promise, *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"* (Revelation 3:19). And John the apostle wrote, *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3). Our loving God works with us, through His Son and Holy Spirit, to make us worthy of living with Him in heaven forever.

From the chorus of "The Love Of God is Greater Far":

O love of God, how rich and pure!

How measureless and strong!

It shall evermore endure,

The saints' and angels' song.