

Keeping Ourselves Unspotted from the World
(Lesson 49)

Introduction:

1. In order to practice "pure and undefiled religion before God" we must "keep ourselves unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).
2. God has greatly blessed us by providing instructions in His Word that will help us to remain free from the world's spots.
3. In this lesson we are concentrating on the role of love with emphasis on 1 Corinthians.
4. Before we study chapter 13, we need to point out that . . .

Discussion:

- I. THE CHRISTIANS IN CORINTH HAD NOT KEPT THEMSELVES UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD
 - A. We read about their conversion in Acts 18 (vs.8, 11).
 - B. Paul later learned that the members of the Corinthian church:
 1. were divided into various factions (1:11-12)
 2. were extending fellowship to a fornicator (5:1-2)
 3. were settling their differences by going to court (6:1, 6)
 4. were experiencing difficulties over eating meat offered to idols (8:12)
 5. were not observing the Lord's Supper properly (11:20-21)
 6. were exalting certain spiritual gifts and looking down on others (ch.12 & 14).
 - C. These matters indicate that the church in Corinth suffered from a lack of love.
 1. Christians are to do everything with love (16:14).
 2. However, love appeared to be lacking in everything these Christians did.
 - D. (12:31) Paul said he was showing this congregation "a more excellent way."
- II. FROM CH.13 WE LEARN 3 REASONS WHY THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY INCLUDES LOVE
 - A. (vs.1-3) The more excellent way includes love because without love we are nothing.
 1. (vs.1-2) This principle applied to spiritual gifts.
 2. (vs.3) It also applies to all acts of benevolence and sacrifice.
 - B. (vs.4-7) The more excellent way includes love because of its characteristics.
 1. Negatively, love does not envy [is not jealous], does not vaunt itself [brag or boast], is not puffed up [arrogant], does not behave itself unseemly, does not seek its own [insist on having its own way], is not easily provoked, does not think evil [hold a grudge], and does not rejoice in iniquity [unrighteousness].
 2. Positively, love suffers long [is patient], is kind, rejoices in the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.
 3. True love is determined by behavior -- not by words (1 John 3:18).
 - C. (vs.8-13) The more excellent way includes love because love is everlasting.
 1. Love never fails, but spiritual gifts would end when "that which is perfect" (James 1:25) came.
 - a. If the Corinthians continued using their gifts without love, when the gifts disappeared, only strife and division would remain.
 - b. If they used their gifts with love, when the gifts no longer existed, love would continue.
 2. Even though faith will eventually become sight and hope will become reality, love will continue and is therefore the greatest.

Conclusion:

1. A lack of love prevented the members of the Corinthian church from keeping themselves unspotted from the world.
2. Let us profit from their mistake and follow the instructions that Paul gave them so we can practice pure and undefiled religion before God.
3. Additional instructions relating to love are given in Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 3:14; 1 Peter 1:22; and 1 John 4:10-11.