THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE
(I Corinthians 13:1-13)

Introduction: 1. The badge of discipleship is our love (John 13:34-35).
2. One cannot be saved unless he loves (I John 4:7-8).
3. This lesson is intended to define the love that God expects us to demonstrate.

I. ACTIONS WITHOUT LOVE
   1. Speaking in tongues - meaningless noise without love.
   2. Other spiritual gifts - amounts to nothing without love.
   3. Benevolence - no profit without love.
B. Christianity involves more than just duties to be performed, obligations to be met, and rituals to be practiced, it involves the heart.

II. WHAT LOVE DOES NOT DO
A. Love does not envy (13:4).
   1. Envy is mentioned as one of the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:21).
      a. Cain killed Abel because of envy (I John 3:12).
      b. The Jews killed Jesus because of envy (Matthew 27:18).
      c. The apostles were imprisoned because of envy (Acts 5:17-18).
B. Love does not vaunt or parade itself (13:4).
   1. A spirit of arrogance is not a fruit of love.
   2. "When someone sings his own praises, he usually sings alone."
   3. Love esteems others rather than self (Philippians 2:3).
C. Love does not behave unseemly or rudely (13:5).
   1. Love is courteous toward others.
   2. Some take pride in their tactlessness, by stating that their only being honest. However, more often than not it is a sign of their lack of sensitivity.
D. Love does not seek its own (13:5).
   1. Love is not selfish; it should consider others.
   2. Love involves self denial (Romans 15:1-2).
E. Love is not provoked (13:5).
   1. A Christian should not be noted for his anger, much rather, his peaceful nature (James 1:19-20).
   2. Although injured by others, love returns good for evil (Romans 12:21).
F. Love takes no account of evil (13:5).
   1. Love does not keep a running list of injuries sustained or sins committed by others.
G. Love does not rejoice in iniquity (13:6).
   1. Love does not enjoy watching, listening to, or participating in unrighteousness.
III. WHAT LOVE DOES DO

A. Love suffers long (13:4).
   1. Love is merciful and forbearing with others.
   2. Knowing what it is like to be guilty of sin, we ought to be patient and longsuffering with others when they sin.

B. Love is kind (13:4).
   1. Kindness will seek to spare another's feelings even while being provoked.
   2. (Ephesians 4:32) Be kind to one another.

C. Love bears all things (13:7).
   1. Doing the unpleasant is one of the greatest test of love.
   2. (I Peter 4:8) Love covers a multitude of sins.

D. Love believes all things (13:7).
   1. This does not mean we are to be naive or gullible, but we should be ready to believe the best in people.
   2. Innocent until proven guilty is not just an American philosophy, it is a Christian philosophy.

E. Love hopes all things (13:7).
   1. Love expects the best in life and the best in men.
   2. A pessimistic Christian is about as natural as a refrigerator in an igloo.
   3. Love should anticipate that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

F. Love endures all things (13:7).
   1. No doubt, by the end of our life, we will have many battle scars from our walk with Christ, however love endures (Galatians 6:17).
   2. Love never gives up on yourself or others.

Conclusion: 1. Love is essential to our salvation, therefore we must work to possess these qualities of genuine love.