

e-concepts

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Hope and Love

Dr. David DeWitt and R J Regan (an excerpt from the “Hope” study material)

But now faith, hope, love, abide these three, and the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

- Faith is trusting verifiable evidence.
- Hope is expecting the realization of a desire.
- Love is giving (or doing the best good) expecting nothing in return.
- Faith is a decision.
- Hope is a desire.
- Love is an action.

Whereas hope is almost the same as faith, it is almost the opposite of love.

There are several different definitions of love, even in the Bible. And since we are here studying hope we will only use the most powerful New Testament word, *agape* as defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. He wrote:

*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have **love**, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have **love**, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have **love**, it **profits** me nothing. **Love** is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; **it does not seek its own**, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, **hopes** all things, endures all things (1 Corinthians 13:1-7).*

The significant aspect here, which makes love different from hope, is that *Love...does not seek its own*. Hope does. **Love is non-profit. Hope is for-profit**. And Paul said love is what makes our actions profitable.

It is also interesting that Christ and the apostles **commanded** believers **to love** one another. What is fascinating about that is we only obey a command when we perceive it is in our best interest to do so, and we can only love one another by giving expecting nothing in return.

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also **love one another**.*

Romans 13:8 *Owe nothing to anyone except to **love one another**; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.*

1John 3:23 *This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another**, just as He commanded us.*

1John 4:7 *Beloved, let us **love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

1John 4:1 *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another**.*

Notice:

1. *Love...does not seek its own.* So the application of love is giving, doing something for the best good of others, expecting nothing in return – giving without the thought of reciprocity.
2. Love in 1 Corinthians 13 is in the context of personal *profit* – *opheloumai* personal *gain*, or *benefit* (Strong's). So, the selfless giving of love is in the context of personal *gain*, or *benefit*.
3. Love for other believers is a *commandment* from God. Commands are always obeyed with self-interest in mind. The command to *love one another, even as I have loved you* is a directive to give to one another without self-interest. Therefore, both selfless acts and self-interest are somehow true and not contradictory.
4. We are to *love one another, for love is from God... if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* We are to give without thoughts of reciprocity, because that's what God does.
5. Love is a selfless act (in the sense that there is no return for the action) done in the present.
Hope is self-interest, in the future.
6. Love means I'm out something with a net loss. Hope means I get something with a net gain.
7. Loving acts are usually hopeful. Altruism doesn't exist. **We cannot live without hope.**

If I give \$20 to a bum on the street, then I'm out the \$20. So, in the present, I have a net loss. It is a loving act. But I also may want God to reward me in some way for that loving act, in the future. Or I may simply desire for God to be pleased with that, or I could want my children to learn the lesson of generosity, or I might give the \$20 just because I'm afraid I would feel guilty later if I didn't. In any of those cases, I also have hope, I do it because I desire a future benefit.

But if I think I am giving without self-desire, something bad is going to happen. If I don't see some future desire fulfilled, I will be negatively affected by the gift, **because I cannot live without hope.** Love does not look for what is in one's own best self-interest. But hope does.

We suggest these are not contradictory, they are complementary. We should never think that we must give up hope for love. Let's say you have a very difficult marriage. Your spouse is not a giving, loving, person. 1 Corinthians 13 says you are to love them by being *patient, kind, not jealous, not take into account a wrong suffered* etc. Your love for your ungrateful spouse *does not seek its own* self-interest. In other words, loving acts do not seek a reciprocal loving act.

But that does not mean you should deny your own self-interest in the future. If you do that, your loving acts will dry up like the apples on a dead apple tree. You may love your ungrateful spouse as an example for your children, or to develop your endurance (James 1:2-4), or more importantly to be pleasing to God. At the same time, you pursue desired expectations by working out, developing a hobby, furthering your education, developing your knowledge of the Bible, fellowshiping with other believers or whatever makes you *perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* We should not think love disallows hope.

But we must also not think that hope disallows love. We must never think that if we have hope, if we desire getting something in the future, that it must inhibit our love. For example, I should not refuse to give to the poor because I want to save money – thinking, “If I give to the poor I will have less money to save.” My hope should not quench my love.

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