

Gathering

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"But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection"
Colossians 3:14 (NKJV)

This is not the first nor the last time that Paul would present love as the preferred and greatest fruit born in the believer and sourced by the Holy Spirit. Nor is it the first time he places this virtue in close proximity to other fruit that bear many of love's qualities.

It could well be said that all the virtues of the Spirit listed in Colossians 3:12–13 (*tender mercies, kindness, humility, etc*) find their beginning point, their birth and their sustainability in love. None of these are possible if they do not flow out of a heart of love!

Paul never attempts to place these virtues, these gifts, these fruits on an equal plain. The first three words of Colossians 3:14 make the distinction and prioritization clear: *"But ABOVE ALL"*.

We have seen this before in the Apostles writings. We read in 1 Corinthians 13:13 (NKJV) *"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE."*

Love is ABOVE ALL, love is THE GREATEST!

Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23 is slightly longer than the list here (*Galatians wins 9–7!*) but even there love is listed first! Based on the contexts found in other Scripture, we can confidently know that this was intentional in the mind of the writer. Love is FIRST!

Love, as the superior fruit, and perhaps even the first fruit that makes all the other fruit possible, calls us to action. This is clear when we read in verse 14 to *"put on love"*. Yes, indeed! We intend to clothe ourselves today, first and foremost, in love!

After reading the scripture, consider these questions:

- What are some practical ways to "put on" love?
- Do you agree that other fruit is only possible if we first love? That love is the starting point?
- If the soil is right, the tree watered and nurtured, fruit comes naturally. How is this true with Biblical love? How can my love, born of the Spirit be natural and not forced?
- In your opinion, why is the "greatest of these love"?

Complete your monthly report and turn it in to the Corps Officer.

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All the gifts of the Spirit are wonderful, born of the Spirit; yet Paul makes it clear that only one, love, stands by itself at the top of the list. If we continue to ask the Holy Spirit for a baptism of love, we will, inevitably see, other fruit of the Spirit springing up in our lives.

GALATIANS 5: 16-25

Compare and contrast this text with our Colossians 3 text. What are the similarities? Differences? What new insights do you gain from this companion text?

I CORINTHIANS 13

The closing statement in I Corinthians 13 is well known; “*The greatest of these is love*”. What else does the great “*love chapter*” teach us about the high priority of love? What does it teach us about the exercise of our spiritual gifts (*in contrast to the fruit*) both with and without love?



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