Love is Greater than Faith

If we were asked to identify the greatest principle in the gospel of our salvation, we might answer "faith"—for we are "justified by faith" (Rom 5:1). Yet faith isn't the greatest principle.

When Paul spoke of the chief elements of the gospel—those things which should fill the heart of the Christian—he named, "Faith, hope and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love" (1Co 13:13). So we see that love is the greatest commandment in the gospel, just as it was in the law and the prophets.

Why is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31) a lesser commandment than "Love the Lord your God" (Mrk 12:30)? The answer to that is seen when we look at the origin or source of faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17).

When you preach the gospel, the hearers do not automatically believe. They need something in their heart before faith can come by hearing. They need "...a love of the truth so as to be saved" (2Th 2:10).

Without a love of the truth one does not hear the truth in a way that produces faith. Now this love of God's truth derives from a love for God himself. So faith is secondary to, and depends upon, a wholehearted love for God. That love therefore is greater than faith.

Influence of Love

Lesson 7 in the Seven Influences series
By Ron Graham

This is our seventh and final lesson on the good influences that motivate us to obey God. In this lesson, we consider what is arguably the most powerful influence of all. When Paul spoke of the chief elements of the gospel—those things which should fill and deeply influence the heart of the Christian—he named, "Faith, hope and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love" (1Co 13:13).

As we shall see in a moment, Jesus spoke of a love for God as the greatest commandment in the law and the prophets. But it is also the greatest commandment in the gospel.

[By the way, it comes as a surprise to some, who say that we are "saved by faith alone" to be reminded—as mentioned above—that love is greater than faith (1Co 13:13). Are we not saved by love? Is love not greater than faith? Then how do they say we are saved by faith only?]