

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

What Matters Most

Intro: Tonight we come to what is probably one of the best known chapters in the entire Bible.

A) Even unbelievers are familiar with this chapter because it is often quoted at weddings.

B) What is interesting is most people are unfamiliar with the context of this chapter and its placement in the Bible

C) Last week we began looking at Paul's instruction to the Church in Corinth about the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Chapters 12-14 were written to combat the problems that existed in Corinth related to the spiritual gifts and their usage in the church.

A) Chapter 12 tells us what the gifts are and what is their purpose in the body of Christ.

B) Chapter 14 tells us about the order and function of the gifts in the setting of the church gathering.

C) I mentioned this last week that – it would make sense that after telling us what the gifts are in and their purpose in Chapter 12

1) it would seem logical that Paul would proceed right into the information in chapter 14 to tell us how the gifts are to function.

But that is not what he does! Instead he pauses to talk to us about what matters most in regards to the gifts – and that is Love!

A) NT Wright describes these chapters as a slow moving symphony that moves from 12 to Ch. 14

B) Chapter 13 is like the bridge in the middle of the song that sort of hits a crescendo

1) It is the part of the song that you remember – and it is designed that way because it is what MATTERS MOST!

C) The Focus of Chapter 13 is Love –

1) Paul established in Chapter 12 – the purpose of the gifts is for the profit of all – the building up of the body

2) The best gift is the gift that meets the need of the moment

D) Therefore a heart of love is going to be essential in properly functioning in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest, most essential gift that God gave His church, the gift that contains the most divine power is the gift of His love working in us and through us.

A) His love was placed within us when we were saved by His grace: Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Roman 5:5

B) His love, working in us, and displayed one to another, is the greatest testimony we have to a lost world:

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

C) When we walk in love one for another, we are walking in obedience to the Lord:

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

Outline

- Love's Distinction V.1-3
- Love's Description V.4-12
- Love's Durability V.13

Love's Distinction V.1-3

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, Now this is not a reference to the gift of tongues Paul introduces in Ch. 12

A) The tongues of men and of angels is another way of speaking with great eloquence -

B) we are talking a gifted communicator

Bb)But Paul says a person can be a gifted communicator – wow people but in the eyes of heaven – like a sounding brass or clanging cymbal
1)Loud and obnoxious

C)We have witnessed this in recent years – Pastors who have been known as great Bible teachers and communicators –
1)Who have been fired from their churches and some who have even been disqualified from ministry – for being bullies

D)Consistently Treating people in a manner that does not represent Christ at all.

E)Paul says – It doesn't matter how gifted you are or how well you speak without love it is just noise.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

A)Great gifts and great faith – don't matter without love – I am nothing in the eyes heaven.

A man with faith can move great mountains; but he will set them down right in the path of somebody else – or right on somebody else - if he doesn't have love!

B)People might applaud you for your great faith here on earth –
1)but what really matters is the applause of heaven

C)All for his glory – not my glory!

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

A)Motives are at the heart of this statement –

B)Some people make huge sacrifices that are very helpful to others

C)The problem is the motive is self-recognition {they want to be seen favorably by others –

D)Paul says in the eyes of heaven – it profits me nothing - no reward for that contribution or sacrifice

It is worth noting that the word Love that Paul uses here in this text is the word Agape –

A)a love that gives simply for the sake of giving, never expecting anything in return.

B)Agape is active / not passive !

1)The focus is not so much on what love is / but what love does/ doesn't do

1 John 3:18 *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but indeed and in truth.- That's Agape*

C)Love's Distinction – All the gifts and talents in the world are nothing in heavens eyes without love

Love's Description V.4-12

- Love's features v.4-6
- Love's fortitude v.7-12

Love's features v.4-6

A)What love does and doesn't do

4 Love suffers long and is kind;
“patient endurance under provocation.”

B)The literal meaning of the word is “long-tempered”.

1)This characteristic of love reveals the truth that love does not retaliate!

C)Peter asked, “Lord, how often should I forgive someone who offends me? Seven times?”

1)perhaps thinking Jesus would be impressed with his generosity

D)Jesus blows Peters mind – $70 \times 7 = 490$

1) “You're to keep forgiving until you lose track of how many times someone has offended you.”

E)Love never says, “I've had enough.” It suffers indefinitely.

1)Jesus ever give up on you? –
2)Why do we give up on others ?

4 Love suffers long and is kind;

A)While it's suffering, it doesn't become cynical or bitter. It remains kind.

B)I am going to let you know how long suffering I have been

C) This word Kind - refers to active goodness that goes forth in behalf of others.

What Love doesn't do- 8 things

#1 love does not envy;

A) True love is not jealous over the abilities or possessions of another.

B) Instead of being jealous when others prosper or excel, love is pleased when they do well.

#2 love does not parade itself,

A) Literally, this phrase means "does not make a parade." Love does not brag!

B) It does not draw attention to itself or to what it is doing.

C) A person who must be the center of attention and is hurt when he is not is not walking in love!

#3 is not puffed up; - Big head -

A) To be proud is to be overly self-confident or insubordinate to God and others.

B) The Scriptures of the OT condemn pride as the source of much destruction and pain in the world.

C) When one cares about other people, he does not find himself full of self-importance or arrogance toward others.

#4 does not behave rudely,

A) At the heart of rudeness is a disregard for the opinions and customs that others have adopted.

B) When one does not concern himself w/ the likes /dislikes of others, he shows a disrespect for them.

C) Proper regard, on the other hand, indicates love for other people.

D) Love is never rude, but it always treats others with compassion, consideration and respect!

1) Love listens – love shows interest in the opinion and concerns of others

#5 does not seek its own,

A) True love is never selfish and self-centered, but it is actively interested in what will profit others.

B) It never looks at itself first, but it always considers another ahead of itself.

C) Paul communicates the same idea in Romans 12:10: *in honor giving preference to one another.*

D) Also, Philippians 2:4 carries the same thought: *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

E) This is being like Jesus in a most basic way, 1) being an *others-centered* person instead of a *self-centered* person.

#6 is not provoked,

A) Not easily angered – not a hot head

B) True Love only responds in anger to the things that anger God!

One of Abraham Lincoln's most outspoken political enemies was a man named Edwin J. Stanton.

Stanton called Lincoln a "low cunning clown" and the "original gorilla."

He even said this, "It is ridiculous for people to go to Africa to see a gorilla, when they could find one easily in Springfield, Illinois."

To Lincoln's credit, he never responded to these insults. Yet, when he was elected President, Lincoln chose Stanton to be his Secretary of War.

When asked why, Lincoln said, "Because he is the best man!"

Later, when Lincoln had been assassinated, Stanton stood by the coffin which contained Lincoln's body and said through his tears, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen."

Love in action won this man over in the end!

#7 thinks no evil - keeps no record of wrongs

A) My wife gets historical story

B) Denise and my Story - she had never brought that up until 25 years later

1) Prepping for a marriage conference - talking about Forgiveness

C) Scars – that define vs scars that are a symbol of God’s grace

#8 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

A) Love does not rejoice in sin; whether it is its own sins, or the sin of others.

B) Love hates sin! Love does not rejoice when another falls into sin!

but rejoices in the truth;

A) Some translators render “truth” as “good.”

B) In other words, love says to another, “You’re lifted up? You’re being honored? Great!

C) I’m delighted for you!”

1) Love rejoices when the other guy does well, when the other guy is blessed.

Love Description V. 4-12

➤ Love’s fortitude V.7-12

#1 V 7 bears all things,

A) Love always protects – Endures – Covers

1 Peter 4:8 – Love covers a multitude of sins

B) Ham exposed Noah’s nakedness - his other two sons covered it

C) They walked in backwards – they didn’t even want to see it

#2 believes all things,

A) Love gives others a benefit of the doubt - it trust

#3 hopes all things,

A) Loving someone requires maintaining a measure of optimism on that person’s behalf.

B) Hope is an attitude that good will eventually come to those who may now be failing.

C) Failure invades every Christian’s life, and it often causes others to give up on the one who fails.

1) Yet, Christians who love continue to hope for the best.

D) This optimism encourages others to keep moving forward.

E) But This hope is based not on the Christian, but on Christ.

He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it

#4 endures all things.

A) Love always perseveres even in tough seasons

B) When someone is compliant it is easy to love – 1) but love shines the most in tough circumstances and with tough people and tough situations

C) Now here is what is interesting about this:

If you are one who bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things,

A) People will accuse you of being blind to certain situations. But they will be wrong.

B) Agape love is not blind. Quite the opposite. Because love sees more, it’s willing to see less.

C) What do I mean by love sees More - What does love see?

1) It sees the price that was paid on the Cross of Calvary for the person or situation that threatens to make us mad or bitter.

D) Marah – throw in the tree – bitter water sweat

E) Love sees more – love sees the cross – the price that was paid – for my sin your sin

1) Because love sees more it is willing to see less!

#5 V. 8 Love never fails.

Now if you have ever heard a Bible study on 1 Corinthians 13 you have probably heard the teacher say.

A) Try and put your name in the place of love in this paragraph –

B) we try to do that and it is laughable – we don’t measure up

Bb) Then the teacher says – take out your name and put in the name of Jesus – His name fits perfectly –

1) That is how wonderful the love of Jesus is

C)And I admit that is an awesome truth! To know that Jesus loves me that much – his love is perfect in every way.

D)But I think that some believers take this one step to far – by then coming to the conclusion -

1)I don't need to worry about this anymore

E)I can't be this or do this – only Jesus can – YAY for Jesus

Wrong application: This love may not be attainable in our Humanity but it is still supposed to be pursued.

A)Chapter 14:1 Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts

B)Listen: We may never fully attain to this love – in our humanity – but it is still the target – what we are aiming at

1)What we are seeking to grow into –

C)It is the measuring stick of our growth in the Lord

1)It is the byproduct of walking in the Spirit – Galatians 5

Fruit of the Spirit is

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22,23

Joy is love rejoicing/ **Peace** is love resting/
Patience is love waiting and enduring/ **Kindness** is love caring/
Goodness is love motivating/
Faithfulness is love keeping its word/ **Gentleness** is love esteeming others/
Self-control is love restraining

How can we exhibit this kind of love?

A)The only way is to let Jesus Christ live it through us, for He is the embodiment of these characteristics.

B)We can't psyche ourselves into this, NO

C)This kind of love is nothing less than the fruit of the Spirit.

D)But as I walk with the Lord, talk to the Lord, and learn about the Lord,

1)His Spirit produces this character in me ever so slowly, but ever so surely.

JOHN 15 Abide in me

⁵“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

E)The key is not trying harder it is surrender
‘Mark Ayers – Matthew 5:3

v.8 But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

A)Prophecy, tongues, words of knowledge will one day all vanish. Why?

B)In heaven there will be no need for prophecy— words of edification, exhortation, or comfort—
1)because everyone will be perfectly comforted and edified in heaven/ will no longer need to be exhorted.

C)Unknown tongues will vanish because everything will be known in heaven.

1)And words of knowledge will be swallowed up in the perfect knowledge in heaven

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

A)Debate continues over the meaning of “that which is perfect.”

B)Some say “that which is perfect” refers to the Bible.

1)They say the canonization of the New Testament – when the NT was fully given

C)That negated the need for prophecy, words of knowledge, and words of wisdom,

1)since everything man needed to know could be found in Scripture.

Yet, I find it interesting that this interpretation— so common in our time

A)was not suggested by a single commentator until shortly after 1906—

B)That the year of the Azusa Street Revival where an outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place that spread across the country and ultimately around the world.

C)Those in the body of Christ who were threatened by this revival used this text to say, **“Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will vanish when that which is perfect is come.**

D)The Bible is that which is perfect. Therefore, there is no need for these manifestations anymore.”

The problem is, not only is this a relatively new interpretation of this passage,

A)but it violates the context. Paul is not talking about the Bible.

B)He’s talking about seeing Jesus face-to-face.

1)It will be when Jesus comes again that there will be no need for prophecy, tongues, or interpretation.

C)So it is my strong opinion that “that which is perfect” refers to the perfect One—Jesus Christ.

²Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, Brass Mirror but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

Now everything is dim – in heaven everything will be clear and all the questions will be answered

Love’s Durability

13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

A)Faith looks back. Faith tells me Jesus came.

B)Faith allows me to embrace what Jesus did for me on the Cross.

1)Faith reminds me that my sins are forgiven.

C)Therefore, I don’t have to worry about or be haunted by my past.

Hope on the other hand looks ahead.

A)Hope tells me Jesus is coming.

B)Hope reminds me I don’t have to be upset or uptight about the future.

C)Hope is that absolute expectation of coming good

So faith looks back/ hope looks ahead - Love looks around.

A)Love tells me Jesus is here.

B)Love frees me in the present.

C)Love says – I want to see Jesus in my brothers and sisters

D)Love says **I want to be about what is going to be a blessing to my brothers and sisters**

E)Love says - I want the best gift so I can be a help and encouragement to those who are around me

Love is what Matters most

A)We get love by getting closer to Jesus

B)We know that we are growing in Jesus as individuals and as a group – by the amount of love that is flowing from our lives

C)Ch. 14:1 **Pursue Love** – build up others and – desire spiritual gifts