



1 Corinthians 13:1-3 A More Excellent Way Part 1_Love!

July 20, 2014

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

- “Love. A word that comes and goes. But few people really know, what it means, to really love somebody.” Thank you Kirk Franklin ☺!
- The biblical theology of love is both simple and extensive. There is much we could say, and it would take quite awhile to cover.
- Our text’s focus is on agapē (Greek for *love*), which basically means, “an affectionate benevolence.”
- But more than that, 1 Corinthians 13 is essentially a “contextual interruption” of the Spirit’s teaching through Paul on spiritual gifts.
- It is a divine pause in the midst of didactic teaching to ensure the hearer is framing and connecting the teachings to the right place (Christ) and will go forward in obedience with the right motives (heart).
- It is a marvelous chapter that brings to mind so many exhortations about love; the love of God towards us in Christ, the love we should have towards God in Christ, and the love we should have for one another in Christ, expressed through loving service.
- I just love that “the more excellent way” Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:31, grammatically, is “the way of love.” In context, every gift should be used in love (as biblically defined), and every command obeyed in love. Without love, the ultimate point of gifts, and essentially, everything else, is ultimately missed!
- What kind of love, for example, did God show by sending Christ to die for our sins? What kind of love bleeds, suffers, dies, in total holiness and humility, for us?

*Eph 2:4-8 ESV But God, being rich in mercy, because of the **great love with which he loved us**, (5) even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- (6) and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...[Emphasis mine]*

- Hallelujah!!!! Friends, there are just so many wonderful verses that teach us about love. Let’s read a few, in no particular order...and just be blessed by LOVE today! ☺

Love

- *Deu 6:5 You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*
- *Lev 19:34 You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall **love** him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*
- *Deu 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to **love** him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,*
- *Jos 22:5 Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to **love** the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your*

soul."

- *Psa 109:26* Help me, O LORD my God! Save me according to your steadfast **love**!
- *Mat 22:37-39 ESV* And he said to him, "You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.
- *Joh 13:34* A new commandment I give to you, that you **love** one another: just as I have **loved** you, you also are to **love** one another.
- *Joh 15:12* "This is my commandment, that you **love** one another as I have **loved** you.
- *Rom 12:10* **Love** one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.
- *Rom 13:8* Owe no one anything, except to **love** each other, for the one who **loves** another has fulfilled the law.
- *2Co 13:11* Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of **love** and peace will be with you.
- *Gal 5:13* For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.
- *1Th 4:9* Now concerning brotherly **love** you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another,
- *1Pe 4:8-9 ESV* Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since **love** covers a multitude of sins. (9) Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- *1Jn 3:23* And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and **love** one another, just as he has commanded us.
- *Eph 4:2-3 ESV* with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in **love**, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- *Rom 5:8* but God shows his **love** for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- *Rom Psa 31:23* **Love** the LORD, all you his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.
- *Psa 36:5* Your steadfast **love**, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.
- *Psa 118:4* Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast **love** endures forever."
- *Joh 14:15* "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- *Rom 8:37-39 ESV* No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the **love** of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- *14:15* For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died.
- *2Co 5:14* For the **love** of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;
- *Gal 5:6* For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through **love**.
- *Eph 4:15* Rather, speaking the truth in **love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,
- *2Th 3:5* May the Lord direct your hearts to the **love** of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.
- *2Ti 1:13* Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and **love** that are in Christ Jesus.
- *Jud 1:20-21 ESV* But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the **love** of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

- *1Jn 3:10* By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not **love** his brother.

Today's Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

1. In context, Paul has just exhorted the Corinthian church to “desire the higher gifts.” He then tells them that he would show them “a still more excellent way.” (1 Cor 12:31)
2. Again, it is important to note that this section is a pause to ensure hearts are right. Paul isn't calling love a gift in this section; love is the foundation on which all the gifts stand! Love undergirds all a Christian does! Love expressed in loving action is not a gift; it is life! That is the heart of the passage.
3. Remember, in Corinth they spoke in tongues, but put up with illicit sexuality (1 Cor 5); they prophesied but had issues with understanding basic ordinances (1 Cor 11) and idolatry (1 Cor 8-10); they loved wisdom but weren't wise enough to not destroy their brothers (1 Cor 8).
4. In other words, there was lots of spiritual stuff going on, but the foundation of love was lacking!
5. So, love is not set over against the gifts; love is the **way** the gifts must be expressed!

(1Co 13:1 ESV) - If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

- Paul begins with an area of trouble in Corinth; tongues. They manifested the gift, but without love.
- Mathew Henry wrote: “Could a man speak all the languages on earth, and that with the greatest propriety, elegance, and fluency, could he talk like an angel, and yet be without charity, it would be all empty noise, mere unharmonious and useless sound, that would neither profit nor delight. It is not talking freely, nor finely, nor learnedly, of the things of God, that will save ourselves, or profit others, if we are destitute of holy love. It is the charitable heart, not the voluble tongue, that is acceptable with God.”
- It is important to note that Paul isn't putting down the gift; he is raising up the primacy of love. It isn't the gift; it's one's relationship with the **Giver** that counts. Otherwise, we are just making noise.
- “It is hard to escape the implication that what is involved here are two opposing views of what it means to be “spiritual.” For the Corinthians it meant “tongues, wisdom, knowledge” (and pride), but without a commensurate concern for truly Christian behavior. For Paul it meant first of all to be full of the Spirit, which therefore meant to behave as those “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be His holy people.” (1 Cor 1:2) - New International Commentary
- **A thought for us: Tongues or not, how might you infuse your life and therefore your speech with more love that your speech and gifts reflect His holiness?**

(1Co 13:2 ESV) - And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

- Again from Matthew Henry, “Had a man ever so clear an understanding of the prophecies and types under the old dispensation, ever so accurate a knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity, nay, and this by inspiration, from the infallible dictates and illumination of the Spirit of God, without charity he would be nothing; all this would stand him in no stead. Note, a clear and deep head is of no signification, without a benevolent and charitable heart. It is not great knowledge that God sets a value upon, but true and hearty devotion and love.”

- Before we desire to prophesy and issue forth words of knowledge and wisdom; before we ask the LORD to pour out His Spirit and help us walk in a greater level of gifting, this must be understood: if we have not love, we are **nothing** as well. Our motives must be His glory and to bless our brothers and sisters.
- Remember, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Cor 8:1)
- **A thought for us: "Might we more intentionally see our gifts and talents as conduits for His glory? Might we work a bit hard to use them to bless others daily?"**

(1Co 13:3 ESV) - If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

- Many look at this verse and say, "I don't get it; laying down one's life is the greatest love there is!" (John 15:13) True! ☺ But...
- Many people walk in unbiblical forms of asceticism, self-torture and even take their own lives sometimes. Many Muslims kill themselves for Allah as one example. It does not mean true agapē was present. Many do this today without true agapē, and it will profit them nothing on the Day of Judgment.
- Remember saints, love must be **lawful**. Biblical love is defined by the God who is love (1 Jn 4:8), is always towards Him, and always reflects His holiness. Contrary to popular opinion, love is not the absence of Law; it is the fulfillment of Law.
- *Rom 13:8-10 ESV* Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (9) For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (10) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
- True Godly love will cause one to be willing to give all for Christ and to be burned if you will...to die for Christ. But it will be FOR CHRIST...in love.

May we walk in this sort of love as a family and as a church:

John 15:9-17 ESV As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (10) If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. (11) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (12) "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (13) Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (14) You are my friends if you do what I command you. (15) No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. (16) You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (17) These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Amen.