

This Love...

1 Cor. 13

Valentine's Day: known for chocolate, flowers and special romantic gestures.

On my desk I have a plaque:

"Chocolate doesn't ask silly questions. Chocolate understands."

"Love and a cough cannot be hid."

George Herbert

I heard about a young man who fell in love with a young lady.

Being very shy he wrote her a letter every day.

This went on for a year until he found out that she had fallen for the mailman.

Relationships are one of the highest values for Christians

The key to relationships is love.

Today we want to look at the love chapter: 1 Corinthians 13.

This chapter is considered the greatest chapter from a literary standpoint that Paul had ever written. It is called a hymn of love, a lyrical interpretation of the Sermon on the mount and the Beatitudes set to music.

Studying it is somewhat like taking apart a flower.

To fully appreciate a gemstone one must see it in its setting.

Paul has finished a chapter on spiritual gifts and ends with these words,

"...I show you a more excellent way

I. Loves' Prominence

Paul writes,

¹If 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.

²If 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.

³And 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.”

Great gifts, even to the extreme are useless without love
 Using hyperbole Paul exaggerates to the limits of imagination...

- Tongues of men **and of angels.**
 – becomes an irritating noise.
- Gift of prophecy ... **know all mysteries and all knowledge.**
- Gift of faith – **mountain-moving faith.**
 - results in no benefits.

Without love these gifts are unprofitable.

Giving without love is also unprofitable.

- Giving all my possessions to feed the poor.
- Giving my body to be burned.

Without love even sacrificial giving has no rewards.

“it profits you nothing...”

Contrast giving when the motive is love:

“Each one must do just as he as purposed in his heart,
 not grudgingly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Cor. 9:7

II. Love’s Prescription

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous;
 love does not brag and is not arrogant,
⁵does not act unbecomingly;
 it does not seek its own,
 is not provoked,
 does not take into account a wrong suffered,
⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness,
 but rejoices with the truth;
⁷bears all things, believes all things,
 hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

How do we learn this? By doing, since each description is a verb.

This chapter is the best definition of agape.
 Paul shines love through a prism.

We can't learn love until we apply it to our lives.

1. Love's Constructive Nature

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous;

Patience – makrothumia – ‘Long tempered’

Chrysostom said,

“It is a word which is used of the man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself but will never do it.”

Patience never retaliates.

Kind – chresteuomai – “to be useful, serving, and gracious”

It is active good will.

It not only feels generous, it is generous.

It not only desires others' welfare, but works for it.

It is what Jesus meant when he said, “Love your enemies.”

Not Jealous – (first of eight negatives descriptions of love)

Two forms:

I want what someone else has.

I wish they didn't have what they have.

Zeloo – “to have a strong desire” (root of zeal)

Love chooses God's best for the one loved.

2. Love's Selflessness Character

love does not brag and is not arrogant,
⁵does not act unbecomingly;
 it does not seek its own,
 is not provoked,
 does not take into account a wrong suffered,

Love does not:

- **Brag** – talk conceitedly - the other side of jealousy

Jealousy is wanting what others have.

Bragging is trying to make others want what we have.

Jealousy puts others down;
 bragging builds us up.

- **Arrogant** – to be puffed up with pride over some accomplishment, ability, or knowledge.
- **Act unbecomingly** – poor manners.

Stems from lack of concern over the needs of others.

William Barclay translates this, ‘Love does not behave gracelessly’.

Movie: “Please Silence Your Cell Phones”

I received a phone call in a coffee shop that was such good news that I forgot I was sharing the room with other people.

– phone etiquette “Pretend you have to smoke.”

- **Love does not seek its own** – Love is selfless.

In a small English village is an inscription on a tombstone:

Here lies a miser who lived for himself,
And cared for nothing but gathering wealth.
Now where he is or how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares.

Lenski (Bible commentator) has said,

“Cure selfishness and you have just replanted the garden of Eden.”

- **Is not provoked** – to arouse to anger – “Love does not get angry”
– from convulsion or sudden outburst of emotion or action.
- **Does not take into account a wrong suffered**

Calculate or reckon – logizomai – Keep a permanent record.

Love forgives and forgets.

“Love remembers but still forgives.”

Resentment is careful to keep books, which it reads and rereads,
hoping for a chance to get even.

3. Love’ Supreme Success

⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness,
but rejoices with the truth;

⁷bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor. 13:6-7).

- **Love does not justify wrong.**

Contrasted with...

- ***Love rejoices with truth*** – what God says about something.
Love cannot tolerate false doctrine – God’s word is truth.
- ***Bears all things*** – *to cover or to support and therefore to protect.*
Protect them from exposure, ridicule, or harm.
Does not gossip or listen to gossip.
Love never protects sin but is anxious to protect the sinner.
- ***Believes all things*** – Not suspicious or cynical.
Love believes the best for someone.
Spirit of trust. Seeks to restore.
- ***Hopes all things*** – Faith holds on to hope.
- ***Endures all things*** – hupomeno – to endure

A military term used of an army holding a vital position at all costs. Every hardship and every suffering was to be endured in order to hold fast. Love never stops loving.

III. Loves Permanence

:8-10 Love never fails...

IV. Love’s Perspective

:11-13

The greatest of these is love...

V. Love Project

VI. Love Project

- 1. Love is the central thing, the goal, the process and the priceless treasure. God is in the process of conforming us to Christ's character, which is love.**

John the apostle wrote,

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

Paul said to Timothy,

"The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5).

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren..." (Rom. 8:28-29).

- 2. The trials we face are God's chosen tools to make us loving – to replace all thoughts of self for love.**

James writes, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Paul encourages the Romans who are rejoicing in hope of heaven,

"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5).

- 3. God's will for our lives is always to do that which is loving.**

“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12).

“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Gal. 5:13-14).

Allow love to be your guide.

“¹Because faith and hope will have no purpose in heaven, where everything true will be known and everything good will be possessed, they are not equal to love.”

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984) p. 367.