

## 1 Corinthians 13

**Intro:** This is a wonderful chapter but there are three things that we need to remember.

--First, it is important that there is still a context. The Scriptures never speak about love outside of some particular context. In Romans 8 it is the work of God in salvation. In Galatians it is the work of the Spirit in contrast to the work of the flesh. In 1 John it is love as a proof of salvation. Here, it is love as the way for all other religious acts—**12:31+14:1**.

--Second, we must be careful that we don't make Paul say something he is not saying. Paul is not writing this to prove who Jesus is to us. It is true, that Jesus is perfectly loving in all these ways. That said, this chapter is not written to tell us who Christ is but who we should be!

--Third, love is not just an emotion that is totally out of our control. This is not "falling in love" or "love at first sight" or any other fickle emotional wave called love. Biblical love *includes* the mind (truth), the will (body), and the heart (emotion). It is not all one or the other.

--That is why love can be the greatest commandment. It is also why Jesus can hold us accountable for our love. Biblical love is a choice—informed, obedient, and emotional.

**\*John 14:15: If you love Me, keep My commandments.\***

--By way of quick outline we have: The necessity of love (1-3); The character of love (4-7); The permanence of love (8-13).

### Verses 1-3:

--All of these outwardly religious and good acts can be motivated by something other than godly love. We can all live outwardly religious lifestyles that are not loving.

--This was proven by the Corinthians own experience. Their wisdom led to quarrels and divisions (**1:10 + 3:4**); their knowledge of freedom led to sin against Christ and the destruction of brothers and sisters for whom Christ died (**8:2+11**); their remembrance of Christ in communion was for the worst and led to indulgence, drunkenness, and even death (**11:17+21+30**); and their exercise of spiritual gifts was not edifying, ordered, or loving.

--**(1)** This is the gifts of tongues—which was overly prominent in the church—it is highest possible expression.

--**(2)** This is knowledge and understanding and faith in its highest possible expression. Notice the repetition of *all*.

--**(3)** This is personal surrender and sacrifice in its highest possible expression.

--The point that Paul is making here is simple. Our speech, knowledge, faith, or sacrifice is nothing if it does not originate from, and continue to walk in, the love of God. All these things are the *means* but love is the *end*.

**\*Romans 13:8: Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.\***

**\*John 13:34-35: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.\***

--How in the world are we to do this? How could Jesus so freely command this and hold us responsible for a life of love? Clearly, because He made it possible by the gift of His Holy Spirit—which every Corinthian of that day and ever Christian of our day has! We know this love is the fruit of His Holy Spirit in us.

**\*Romans 5:5: *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.*\***

#### **Verses 4-8a:**

--Here Paul moves into a description of this love. Yes—Jesus is the ultimate picture of this but Paul is saying this because this love is to be manifested in us by the Spirit of Christ.

--**(4) *Love suffers long***: Love is patient and enduring. This love is not in a hurry or rushed. This is the love every mother shows for the first 5 years of a child's life! *\*Think Jesus with Judas\**

--***Is kind***: Love is good-natured. It is more than right.

--We only pass through this life once and acts of kindness should fill our path. This was certainly Jesus' life. *\*Think of those kind to Jesus: John the Baptist; Peter's family; the man with the donkey; Simon the Cyrene; the man who brought the sour wine on a reed and put it to His lips so we could hear Him say *It is finished!*; etc. . .\**

--***Does not envy***: There is no jealous ill will, or ungodly rivalry. The opposite would be a content and generous spirit.

--***Does not parade itself***: Paul uses a rare word in the Greek here that means to behave like a braggart or windbag. This is an active calling of attention to oneself. *\*So much of social media!\**

--***Is not puffed up***: Arrogant or conceited. This certainly has the idea of social caste systems and thinking you are better than others. You could add racism here but also smaller acts of self-conceit. *\*Guys and girls puffed up when comparing ourselves amongst ourselves.\**

--**(5) *Does not behave rudely***: The idea here is *shamefully* as used in **7:36**. These are the types of sins that ruin Christian homes. Parents sometimes point to our sacrifices as a defense that should outweigh the shameful rudeness of our daily life. What if we could throw the red flag and have a playback? What if you heard yourself recorded for a day?

*\*Lewis (The Four Loves): "We hear a great deal about the rudeness of the rising generation. I am an oldster myself and might be expected to take the oldster's side, but in fact I have been far more impressed by the bad manners of parents to children than by those of children to parents. Who has not been the embarrassed guest at family meals where the father or mother treated their grown-up offspring with an incivility which, offered to any other young people, would simply have terminated the acquaintance? Dogmatic assertions on matters which the children understand and their elders don't, ruthless interruptions, flat contradictions, ridicule of things the young take seriously—sometimes of their religion—insulting references to their friends, all provide an easy answer to the question, 'Why are they always out? Why do they like every house better than their home?' Who does not prefer civility to barbarism?"\**

--Obviously, this goes beyond parenting into every relationship. Think of the Prodigal son and Elder son and their sins of Action Vs. Attitude.

--***Does not seek its own***: This is just plain selfishness. This is not the path that Jesus walked and that is why He says we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him.

***\*Philippians 2:4: Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.\****

--Who else are you looking out for? Would they even know it? \*Boss with employees\*

--Happiness is not in having or getting but in serving and giving. The minute you are first in your world you will become miserable.

--***Is not provoked***: Not easily angered. A short temper is a symptom of a sinful and unloving nature.

***\*James 1:19-20: So then, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.\****

--***Thinks no evil***: Or does not keep accounts of evil. Both of these go together. When you hold an account of evil against someone—or numerous people—you begin to suspiciously impute evil motives to others.

--This doesn't mean that love is gullible. That is not true at all and Paul knows that.

***\*Philippians 1:9: And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and discernment.\****

--It simply means that love will think the best of people and will not insert evil where it is not already proven to be found.

--**(6)** Love will always rejoice in what is true and not in any perversion of the truth—which is what evil is! \*Fall of an enemy; Horror movies; Darkness; etc.\*

--John 3:21 tells us: ***But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.***

--Romans 1 tells us that men: ***suppress the truth in unrighteousness.***

--1 John 1:6 tells us: ***If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.***

--So the truth is practiced in the light and not suppressed in unrighteousness.

--**(7-8a) All things** means *always* or *in everything*. Love has tenacity.

--The Greek word for ***bears*** has the idea of a roof or covering.

--***Never Fails*** has the idea of never withering or fading. In fact, love will only grow more and more as our minds, bodies, and emotions progress in the knowledge and grace of God for all eternity.

--Love never fails because God never fails—and God is love—and His purposes for us are loving and we can never be separated from them. Eternity must be set in an eternal love.

***\*Jeremiah 31:3: The LORD has appeared of old to me saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."\****

### **Verses 8b-12:**

--(8-10) The spiritual gifts that we have now are *a way* the Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad in our hearts *now*, but that spiritual gifts as a particular means of love will have an end. Love will not. Spiritual gifts will.

--Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge being those of unique spiritual gifts.

--***That which is perfect*** is simply the fullness of God's intentions for us. His kingdom in a new heavens and new earth.

--Even many Biblical Cessationists freely admit that the phrase ***that which is perfect*** cannot mean the finished canon of Scripture. There are two main reasons:

--First, it would mean absolutely nothing to the Corinthians. They had no idea or conception of that and it is likely Paul didn't either.

--Second, even the reality of a finished canon does not answer the question of why it would cause some of the promise of the Holy Spirit to be limited. Why would it limit the avenue of love that Paul is telling them to recognize and desire?

--(11-12) Paul wants these Corinthians to realize that what they were inflating and taking so much pride in were actually small matters compared to what God had in store for them.

--When they stepped into the reality of true spiritual maturity they would act much differently than their present state. Like difference between children and adults.

--What we know now is only partial, like a dim reflection in a mirror. The experience will be like the difference between seeing a photograph of a person and standing before that person face to face.

--Finally, the way that we will know things later will be more like the knowledge God has of things. It will be insight with intuitive comprehension. \*Think more like Adam in creation—Why the current heavenly inhabitants can have joy!\*

### **Verse 13:**

--Here we see faith, hope, and love connected as they are numerous other times in Scripture (**Rom. 5:1-5; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8**). They are the basic permanent elements of the Christian life and character.

--Some have a hard time understanding—based on how faith and hope are spoken of in a few other places—how they can also continue. But it is easy to say that we will continue to have trust in the character of God, and gladly hope in the future expression of that character, for all eternity. \*If you or I were placed on the edge of the new earth and told to go and explore what would be your basic instinct? Faith and hope!\*

--But why is love the greatest? Because faith and hope will remain—yet changed—but love will remain unchanged—only purified.

\*Drummond (The Greatest Thing In The World): *“There is a great deal in the world that is delightful and beautiful; there is a great deal in it that is engrossing; but it will not last. All that is in the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, are but for a little while. Love not the world therefore. Nothing that it contains is worth the life and consecration of an immortal soul. The immortal soul must give itself to something that is immortal. And the only immortal things are these: ‘Now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.’”\**

--Paul wants the Corinthians to see this. What is worth the life and consecration of their immortal soul? Spiritual gifts? No. Faith, hope, and love. Especially love.

--The words of this chapter can easily become worn, like an old coin handled much too often so that all the particulars have become indistinct. Yet the realities here are so rich! They are still a bit of the eternal to help us on our pilgrim way through this world.

\*Carson (Showing the Spirit): *“The greatest evidence that heaven has invaded our sphere, that the Spirit has been poured out upon us, that we are citizens of a kingdom not yet consummated, is Christian love.”\**

--One day soon, all those that know the Lord (Continuationists and Cessationists) will be with the Lord for all eternity. When that happens—what will connect us then? What will we wish to have expressed here on earth? Love.

**\*1 Thessalonians 3:12-13: *And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love one to another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.\****