

What's Love Got to Do with It?

1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

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1 Corinthians 13:4-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 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.

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, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

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

The word love is used quite often in our vocabulary from day to day; we often say things to people dear to us like our mother, father, siblings or children words like, "I will always love you with all my heart".

Then there are times that we love in the abstract when we say things like, "I love your dress, or I love that suit, or I love your hair". Some folks will even go to a good movie and afterwards might say "you have to see this movie because I love this movie". Others use love very loosely; for instance, sometimes when we watch television and see someone who makes us laugh, and we might say "I love that comedian he is so funny" ... It seems as though, we *feel* therefore, we love.

Then there are those people who are looking for love, those who are wondering what is love, and others who simply don't believe in love. On the other hand, many people say that they love someone or something, but then their actions prove otherwise. The Apostle John stated in 1John 3:18, "we love in words, but not in deed and truth".

The *dictionary* defines love as an intense feeling of deep affection... but what does biblical love look like? In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul will argue that *love is an action*.

The kind of love Paul talks about is seen, experienced, and demonstrated, not just a feeling as defined by our dictionary. We often do what we want when we want because we “feel” like it. And if we don’t “feel” like it, we don’t do it.

As we study this passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul wants us to focus on love in the sense of what it does. Therefore; if *love is an action*, we need to understand what God has to say about love; and then we will discover ‘what’s love got to do with it’. *It* meaning the way we as Christians should live our lives in love for one another. Also, we will know what love is and what it looks like when it is lived out in the church, in our relationships, and towards each other.

In our scripture for today, Paul teaches that the Corinthian church was emphasizing a good thing, spiritual gifts, *but* was neglecting the best thing, and that was love. They were using their gifts apart from love. Paul makes the point that the use of their God-given gifts would amount to nothing if the Corinthians did not make *love* their priority.

As Christian, when we show love towards one another, do we demonstrate a Godly love? Or do we love in word only. 1 Cor. 13:1, Paul writes, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*” We have to ask ourselves the question, do we demonstrate selfless love, or are we simply making useless sounds that will profit us nothing?

In the first thirteen verses of 1 Corinthians, Paul provides three distinctions of love, to help us to see what real love looks like. He explains the 1. ***The patience of love*** in being long suffering 2. ***The practice of love***, how love is greater than all spiritual gifts. 3. ***The permanence of love***, love is an eternal gift

Paul describes how love acts. Reminding us that love is not just what we talk about; it is an action. Paul gives several characteristics of love to show how love acts or what it looks like in everyday life. This kind of love Paul talks about is not just any kind of love that we can sometimes use so loosely, but it is *real* and genuine love. Jesus demonstrates this kind of love, when He died on the cross for our sins. This kind of love grows out of sincere and fervent devotion to God.

Paul leaves no room for misunderstanding in his description of love, in the span of just a few verses he gives us 15 characteristics of love; *Selfless love*, beginning with love suffers long, meaning that love is patient. Many times in regards to patience, when we don’t need patience we want it; and when we are frustrated and need patience, that’s when we don’t want it. We want to say exactly what we are feeling about our frustrations. This can sometimes result in hurt feelings towards others; this is why Paul helps us to know that if you are patient, then you’re slow to anger and you bear with others’ imperfections and differences. Not only that, you will also pray for them, and allow God to bring about a change in them and in *you* (in order to give you the strength that you need to resist the urge to treat your brother or sister unkindly because of something that they may have done). Love never says, “I’ll give you just one more

chance.” Love is patient and forgiving (70 times 7), staying in prayer for our brothers and sister for as long as prayer is needed... Paul tells us, *Love suffers long*.

Now, it's important for us to know that the apostle does not mean that charity destroys all regard to self; he does not mean that the charitable man should never challenge what is his own, and utterly neglect himself. Scripture even tells us *“thou shalt love thou neighbor as thyself”*. Paul is simply reminding us that love must then root up in that principle or urge that in us, which is to do wrong for wrong. Because, anger cannot rest where *love* resides.

Paul is speaking clearly about the act of love. He also, goes on to say, love is kind, not jealous, not puffed up, does not behave rudely. As Christians, we need “kind” love. This all goes hand in hand because Kindness is patience in action.

A kind person is a Godly person. He seeks out needs and looks for opportunities to meet those needs without looking for a reward, or checking to see who else noticed what they have done. They are forgiving when wronged. They tend to show kindness even when they are treated wrongly... *now that's love*. And it's important for us to learn to love this way. Because Jesus said, *“And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same thing. . . . But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High (Luke 6:33, 35). The kindness of God leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4)*. Kindness motivates others toward positive change.

We all like to say things like, “Yes, some people need to know how to be kind to one another”, pointing to others, but truth be told love and kindness begins within us. (You and Me). The real proving ground of kindness and love begins in our home, training our children to be kind and love one another, it's how you treat your family member that's closest to you...We sometimes say we always hurt the ones we love. I say to you today, perhaps we need to practice the kind of love Paul is talking about, in our home as well as in our church.

I believe that we can have more productivity in our lives as well as in our church, if we begin to share the kind of love that lifts each other up, motivating each other to be all that we can be as believers in Christ. Humbling ourselves in love, understanding that everything we are and everything we possess is an undeserved gift from God. Therefore, we humbly use these gifts to serve others. *Jesus Christ, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)*. As Paul continues his message about what love is and what love isn't, I am reminded of something I read the other day, and it read as follows;

“The secret of every discord in Christian homes, communities and churches is that we seek our own way and our own glory.” Paul said love does not seek its own, seeks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth.

To rejoice in the truth means to be glad about behavior in accordance with the truth of God's Word. If someone you don't like falls into sin, we should not rejoice; we should grieve, because God is grieved over sin. If they repent, that is when we rejoice.

There is a fine balance to love. Although love is kind and overlooks the faults of others, it does not compromise the truth or take a soft view of sin. To allow another person to go on in sin, whether it is known sin or a blind spot, is not looking out for his or her best interest. Love will sensitively confront and correct precisely because it cares deeply and knows that sin destroys. Love rejoices with the truth. Love gets excited when it hears of spiritual victories. Love encourages by expressing joy over even a little evidence of growth. John, the apostle of love, wrote, *"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth"* (3 John 4).

Love bears all things, covers all things, love does not broadcast the problems of others, but lovingly corrects, protects, and prays for others. In other words, Love understand that someone is innocent until proven guilty; instead of guilty until proven innocent.

You might be asking yourself how can we love this way. Gal. 5: 22 tells us that if we want to truly love one another, we must focus on His love for us and walk in His Spirit that produces His love in us. Of course, we need the Lord to lead us and guide us to love one another as He has loved us. We *will* make mistakes and sometimes fall when we should have stood strong, but the Lord will be there to pick you up, turn you around and lovingly forgive and redirect us. And remind us that it all begins and ends with love. Paul says in verse 13, *"abide in faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love"*.

We all have gifts to contribute to this journey and although these gifts may serve us in this life, Paul reminds us that there is a greater understanding of love to come, he said, 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. He goes on to say, Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. In other words, one of these days, in the by and by, we will see *clearly* those things on high that we prepare for down here through love for one another.

As I close, we must never forget the importance of this thing we call love... Jesus said *"A new commandment give I to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another, John 13:34. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples," John 13:35.*

Someone once said that if we discovered that we had only five minutes left to say all we wanted to say, every telephone line would be occupied by people calling other people to stammer out the words, "I love you". Selfless love is our priority. So remember to love others as you love yourself, be kind to one another, and forgive one another daily as the Lord forgives us.

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