

Love

Introduction

Matthew 22:34-40 - 34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

- In the verses preceding these (Matthew 22:23-33), a sect of the Jews called Sadducees, asked Jesus a question about the resurrection. As a group, they did not believe in a resurrection. Jesus' answer had silenced the Sadducees. Now the Pharisees, a different sect that knew the Hebrew law well, had one of their own put him to the test.
- The Pharisees knew that 613 commandments were given by God. Most are familiar with the Ten Commandments, and you may know that the first four speak of how we behave toward God, while the last six speak of how we behave toward one another.
 - **Deuteronomy 6:5-7 - 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.**
- The first part of Jesus' answer comes from the 613, as stated in Deuteronomy 6.
 - **Leviticus 19:18 - You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.**
- The second part of Jesus' answer is stated in Leviticus 19:18.
- Jesus goes on to say that all of the law and the prophets depend upon two commandments: love God and love your fellow man.

- Literally He used the word for “hang” instead of depend. If you think of hanging a picture on the wall, if the hanger fails, the picture falls.

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

- There are two words for “new” in the New Testament.
 - *neos* νέος
 - new in time, or young(er) in age. Neo is used in English as a prefix, such as in neo-natal.
 - *kainos* καινός
 - new in kind, latest; in some contexts, new is superior to old.

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

- It is not because He is going to leave them that they should remember what He said and live it. The same love (*agapao*) that is the badge of discipleship when given to the other disciples, is what will motivate them to keep His commandments. He will soon announce a Helper to be sent to them after His departure.
 - **John 14:16-17 - 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.**
 - **John 15:12 - This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

As we continue through this study, I hope to portray just how fundamental love is. Love should govern how we behave toward one another. Love should govern how we behave toward God.

You don't have to watch very much of the nightly news on TV to realize that love doesn't govern how many people behave.

A former colleague worked as an on-the-scene camera man for a TV station in San Antonio early in his career. The motto he was given was “if it bleeds, it leads.” The more grisly he could make the scene, the more likely it would be used in the lead story. I have never figured out why that seems to attract so many viewers.

How wonderful the world might be if everyone took Jesus' words to heart!

There was a church a long time ago that had many things wrong. Their fragmenting over preachers, their smirking at the incestuous fornicator, their dragging one another to court, their abuse of the weaker disciples, their selfishness and self-centered abuse of the Lord's Supper, their budding rebellion against their place in God's divine order of things, their childish superiority related to their gifts and the jealous or petulant response of the ungifted. Of the latter, Paul comes to the point where he says earnestly desire the gifts, but, there is a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13

13:1-3 - 1 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.

- Paul closed chapter 12 with the words "I show you a more excellent way."
 - **1 Corinthians 12:31 - But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.**
 - Spiritual gifts had a good purpose, but we will see that they were temporary. Regardless of special gifts that individuals had then, all are members of the same body.
 - The more excellent way is love!
 - Someone may be a great speaker, but without love it is only noise.
 - One may have excellent gifts, but without love they are nothing.
 - Someone may do tremendous deeds, but without love they are worthless.
- If I understand Jesus' words, love is fundamental. It should guide all aspects of our lives, relating to God, and relating to each other.
- Love is popularly thought of as a feeling – a warm, fuzzy feeling. It is nice to feel that way, and I don't belittle it. But what does love do?

What does love not do? Paul will end this chapter with the words “And now these three remain (abide): faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Love Defined

- In the English language, we have only one word for love. In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, there are four.
 - *Storge* - This Greek word means to have an affection for someone. It is a family type of love. This word does not appear in the New Testament.
 - *Phileo* - This Greek word means a friendship type of love (John 21:15-17). It is the brotherly type of love that the English word “Philadelphia” comes from. (*phileo* – love; *delphia* – brother).
 - *Eros* - This Greek word is used to describe the passion in the sexual union of a husband and wife. This word is not used in the New Testament. The word in English has degraded into anything erotic.
 - *Agape* - This Greek word means to have a self-sacrificing kind of love. This kind of love involves self-denial. It involves the kind of love God has for His creation. This is the Greek word Paul used when he told the Corinthians he would show them a more excellent way. This is the word Paul used throughout this chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. To have *agape* is to want the highest good for another.
- In the next 5 verses, you may count 14-16 things that describe what love does, or does not do.

13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

- suffers long (*makrothumei* μακροθυμει) - to have patience; to be patient; to exhibit internal and external control in a difficult circumstance, which control could exhibit itself by delaying an action. Another word is long-suffering – patiently waiting, even in suffering, for the outcome.
- kind (*chrēsteuetai* χρηστεύεται) - gentle, benign, harmless, kind.
- envy (*zēloi* ζηλοῖ) - to desire, eagerly desire, show zeal, feel an attitude or emotion of deep concern; to be jealous, envious, to

experience morally corrupt zealous ill will; covet, as a negative attitude of lust and desire for another's possessions. Covetousness is envy in an extreme degree – desire to have what another has and willing to do anything to have it.

- parade (*perpereuetai* περπερεύεται) – to boast, brag, vaunt one's self,
- puffed up (*physioutai* φυσιοῦται) - to puff up, inflate; (pass.) to be proud, arrogant.

13:5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;

- behave rudely (*aschēmonei* ἀσχημονεῖ) - to act improperly, dishonorably, indecently, rudely, open to censure. Love is courteous, polite, and respectful without compromising truth. Some think being loyal and truthful means one must ask blunt questions and answer candidly without any charm. Paul said that love makes it possible to be right with the Lord without being rude.
- does not seek its own –
 - (*ou ou*) - not, absolute negative;
 - (*zētei* ζητεῖ) - to look for, seek out; to try to obtain, desire to possess, strive for;
 - (*heauton* | ἐαυτόν) - himself, herself, itself, themselves;
 - Seeking one's own good is very antithetical (the opposite) of the definition of agape.
 - The ESV translates "It does not insist on its own way;"
 - Dream of the time when disputes between Christians were over one wanting the best for the other, and vice-versa. Then agape would certainly be very strong.
- is not provoked (*paroxynetai* παροξύνεται) - to be greatly distressed; to be angered, irritated. Derived from (*para* – close by or with) and (*oxus* -sharp; swift, quick). The Greek means a convulsion of emotion that is caused by an intense sharpening. Love never flies into a fit of temper. Love is angry with the sin, but it does not become angered with the sinner.
- thinks no evil
 - (*logizetai* λογίζεται) – to credit, count, reckon; regard, think, consider;

- (*kakon* κακόν) - evil, wicked, wrong, bad, a perversion of what pertains to goodness; as a noun, an evil thing can refer to any crime, harm, or moral wrong.
- Literally, love does not keep a log or ledger of evil done.
- Matthew 18:21-22 - 21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

13:6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

- rejoice (*chairei* χαίρει) - to rejoice, be glad, delighted;
- iniquity (*adikia* ἀδικία) – wickedness, evil, wrongdoing, particularly moral wrongdoing;
- truth (*alētheia* ἀλήθεια) - truth, truthfulness; corresponding to reality

13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- bears (*stegei* στέγει) - to put up with, stand, endure; to protect, cover. Literally, it means to build a roof over. A roof covers, and protects. The sense is much the same as “thinks no evil” or “takes no account of evil” from verse 5.
- all things (*panta* πάντα) - all, everything, everyone, whole; always. Nothing is excluded, though there are things that are hard to bear.
- believes (*pisteuei* πιστεύει) - to believe, put one's faith in, trust, with an implication that actions based on that trust may follow;
- hopes (*elpizei* ἐλπίζει) - to hope, hope for, put hope in, expect, an attitude of confidently looking forward to what is good and beneficial
- endures (*hypomenei* ὑπομένει) - to stay behind; to stand firm, endure, persevere

13:8 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.

- never fails –
 - (*oudepote* οὐδέποτε) – never; not at any time.
 - (*ekpiptō* ἐκπίπτω) –
 - (*ek* ἐκ) – often a prefix, most often meaning out or away from.
 - (*piptō* πίπτω) – literally from a word that means to fly;

- So we understand that love never ends, never falls down, never flies away, never disappears.
- prophecies (*prophēteiai* προφητεῖαι) - prophecy, an inspired message, sometimes encouraging obedience to God, sometimes proclaiming the future as a warning to preparedness and continued obedience.
 - A prophet is a spokesman for another. In the Bible, a prophet is a spokesman for God – literally, the mouth of God.
 - Some prophecy is a foretelling of something that lies in the future, so in that sense it is predictive. On one hand, more than 300 prophecies were spoken and written about the Messiah, Jesus. Everyone of them is fulfilled during Jesus' life or shortly thereafter.
 - On the other hand, 247 predictions have been made about when Jesus will return. None of them have proven true as of this writing.
- cease (*katargēthēsontai* καταργηθήσονται) - to nullify, abolish, make ineffective; cease, pass away.
 - The special gift of prophecy, speaking a message from God, was to cease. Men still speak a message from God, but it comes from the pages of scripture, no longer by miraculous gifts.
- tongues (*glōssai* γλῶσσαι) - tongue; language; sometimes refers to the supernatural gift of tongues, in which one speaks in a language not native to them or learned beforehand.
 - The supreme example of this occurred on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles spoke and everyone heard in their own language.
 - Acts 2:7-11 - 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

- knowledge (*gnōsis* γνῶσις) - knowledge, understanding.
 - In a few instances, the Greek word is carried over into the English language.
 - agnostic - a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God or of anything beyond material phenomena; a person who claims neither faith nor disbelief in God.
 - diagnostic – using known methods to come to know the cause of an illness or condition.
 - Then, it was a special gift. Now, we spend long hours in study to know and understand God’s word.
- All of these gifts were useful and purposeful, but they were temporary.

13:9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

- know (*ginōskomen* γινώσκωμεν) - to know, come to know, recognize, understand. Verb form.
- part (*merous* μέρος) – a part or piece of the whole, but not the whole.
- prophecy (*prophēteuomen* προφητεύομεν) - to prophesy, to speak an inspired message, sometimes encouraging obedience to God, sometimes proclaiming the future as a warning to preparedness and continued obedience. Verb form.

13:10 But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

- perfect (*teleion* τέλειον) – complete, perfect, mature, finished. The word is often used for *complete*. The message is that what they now have in the form of special gifts, are only partial, and temporary.
- There are different views on what Paul meant by the perfect (complete) to come.
 - While the apostles were living, they had the power to give special gifts to men. Within approximately 20 years of the death of the last of the apostles, some compilations of all of the New Testament writings began to appear (the Old Testament had been complete for about 400 years and even translated from Hebrew to Greek). One view is that the completion of the Bible is what Paul meant. It is not my intention or purpose to either support or deny that view. It is true, that in the absence of the special spiritual gifts that ceased with the apostles, the written word is the one

source that claims to be from God and reveals all that we can learn about God and His son.

- A second view is that love is that which is complete. Recall Jesus' words on the greatest commandments – everything depends upon love. Love is fundamental. But love is not new. Maybe it is new in the sense that Jesus showed us what love is by giving His life for us. A further explanation of the view is that “the perfect” is the matured state of the believer as a result of love being the dominant element in his relation to God.
- A third view is that heaven is that which is complete, and that is true, but it comes after our lives have ended.
- I do not have an opinion to give, other than to say that the whole context of 1 Corinthians 13 is love, and by living a life of love we can accomplish the desire of God that we love him, and we love our fellow man (whether they reciprocate or not). It is unconditional love.

13:11 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.

- The contrast between the partial understanding of a child and the more complete, mature understanding of an adult emphasizes Paul's point. I so raise a question: Are there not characteristics of a child-like nature that could serve adults well?
- Jesus welcomed the simple, trusting, loving nature of a child.
 - **Matthew 19:14 - But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."**
- The raising of children can go terribly wrong. Without itemizing all the ways in which this happens, I quote the words of a song:
 - *You've got to be taught, before it's too late;*
 - *Before you are six, or seven, or eight,*
 - *To hate all the people your relatives hate.*
 - *You've got to be carefully taught.*
- Another song (probably in the hymn book here)
 - With a child-like heart of love
 - At thy bidding may I move
 - Prompt to serve and follow thee

- Loving Him who first loved me.
- Another obvious lesson (at least to me, perhaps to you also) is to teach our children to love, how to love – unconditionally.

13:12 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.

- mirror (*esoptrou* ἑσόπτρου) – derived from a word from which we get ophthalmology and optometry - appear (*optanomai* ὀπτάνομαι).
 - Glass-making was not a well-developed technology in the middle of the first century, so the image seen in a mirror then would not compare to today. Then, it would have been a dim reflection, not very close to seeing in person, face-to-face. So is the contrast between what we see and know spiritually and what we will see and understand clearly in the age to come.
- know (*ginōskō* γινώσκω) - to know, come to know, recognize, understand;
 - When we contrast what we know now to what we will know, it is much the same as looking in a poor mirror now, and not seeing an accurate representation of reality.
- then (*tote* τότε) - then, when, at that time.
 - *When* is *then*? When that which is perfect has come – from 13:10. It won't be a secret. We will know when it comes.
 - What do we do in the meantime?
 - **1 John 4:7-12 - 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.**

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

- abide (*menei μένει*) - to stay, remain, live, dwell, abide; to be in a state that begins and continues, yet may or may not end or stop.
- faith (*pistis πίστις*) – faith, faithfulness, belief, trust, with an implication that actions based on that trust may follow;
- hope (*elpis ἐλπίς*) – hope, expectation.
- love (*agapē ἀγάπη*) –
- **Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**
 - **2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.**
- The time will come when faith will no longer be among these three, because it will become sight.
- The time will come when hope will no longer exist, because it will become reality.
- But love *never* fails, *never* flies away, *never* disappears.
 - **1 John 4: 11 - Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**