

# GOD'S LOVE – THE KEY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Sunday, June 7, 2009

Text: 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13

## INTRODUCTION:

The attributes of God are the result of the manifestation of His very Being. His holiness, wisdom, power, and love are as infinite as Himself. Like all His attributes, it is as impossible to measure the love of God as it is to measure the Person of God, and all true love is from Him. The Bible alone discloses the source and nature of love.

We can never lose sight of the importance of understanding what the Bible says about the direct manifestations of God's love toward men! While the finite mind is incapable of fully understanding an infinite God, it can, nevertheless, comprehend to some extent the desire of God to show His love toward man; through salvation.

*"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).*

*Ephesians 3:19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

## FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVINE LOVE:

### 1. ITS ETERNAL DURATION.

"God is love." He has not attained to love by self effort or culture, nor does He hold love as a detached possession which might be abandoned at will.

Love is a vital part of His Being. It began when He began. If His love were to cease, a very essential part of the Person of God would cease. He is what He is, to a large degree, because of His love. The love of God can know no change.

To Israel He said, **"I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3)**; and of Christ it is written, **"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Lit., without end; John 13 .1; 15:9)**. In God's love toward an individual, there is neither fluctuation nor cessation.

*(John 13:1) 1 Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

*(John 15:9) 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*

## **2. ITS CEASELESS ACTIVITY.**

Though the love of God was once and for all manifested in the sacrifice of His well-beloved Son,

**Romans 5:8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**1 John 3:16** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

that which was manifested in a moment of time is, nevertheless, the revelation of the eternal attitude of God toward men.

## V.13

**And now abides.**] Remains, (menei). The word means, properly, to remain, continue, abide; and is applied to persons remaining in a place, in a state or condition, in contrast to removing or changing their place, or passing away. Here it must be understood to be used to denote permanency, when the other things of which he had spoken had passed away; *and the sense is, that faith, hope, and love would remain when the gift of tongues should cease, and the need of prophecy, etc.; that is, these should survive above all the others mentioned.*

### CONCLUSION:

The Greek word agape (love) seems to have been virtually a Christian invention -- a new word for a new thing (apart from about twenty occurrences in the Greek version of the Old Testament, it is almost non-existent before the New Testament). Agape draws its meaning directly from the revelation of God in Christ. It is not a form of natural affection, however, intense, but a supernatural fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is a matter of will rather than feeling (for Christians must love even those they dislike -- Matt. 5:44-48). It is the basic element in Christ-likeness. As we have read 1 Corinthians 13 we have noted what these verses had to say about the priority (vv. 1-3) purpose (vv. 4-7) and permanence (vv.8-13) of love. Here is a closing thought for you!

If we discovered that we had five minutes left to say all we wanted to say, every telephone, mobile phone would be occupied by people calling other people to say that they love them. Why wait until the last five minutes, to tell Christ and others you love them?

## 3. ITS TRANSPARENT PURITY.

Concerning this aspect of the love of God no human words avail. There is no selfishness in divine love. God has never sought benefits for Himself. He receives nothing; He bestows everything. Peter exhorts believers to love God with a pure heart fervently; but how very few love God for what He is in Himself apart from all His benefits!

**1 Peter 1:22** Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,

## 4. ITS LIMITLESS INTENSITY.

The most costly thing in the universe was the blood of God's only Son; yet God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The sacrifice of His Son for men when they were "sinners" and "enemies" seems to reach to the outmost bounds of infinity; however, we are told of a "much more" love even than this. It is God's love for those who have been reconciled and justified through Christ's death;

**Romans 5:8-10** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**:9** Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

**:10** For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Remember, nothing **"shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Romans 8:39).

## 5. ITS INEXHAUSTIBLE BENEVOLENCE.

There is no hope for this world apart from the marvelous fact that God loves even sinners. But divine love is not passive. God could not ignore the just condemnation of the sinner which His own holiness imposed; but He could take upon Himself the curse which belonged to the sinner - **"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"** (John 15:13) - and this He did in order that, without violating His own holiness, He might be free to save the guilty. **Romans 3:26** to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Being free through the substitutionary death of Christ, God knows no limitations and does not cease working until, to His own satisfaction, He places the justly doomed sinner in Heaven's highest glory, even conformed to the image of Christ.

Saving grace is more than love; it is God's love set absolutely free and made to triumph over His righteous judgments against the sinner. **"By grace are ye saved through faith"** (Ephesians 2:8).

There is also in God a perfect hatred for sin which, like a counterpart of His love, prompts Him to save the sinner from his doom. In like manner, this same hatred for sin, combined with His love, makes of God a Father who chastens His child. **"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten"** (Revelation 3:19), and **"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"** (Hebrews 12:6) .

where there is knowledge, it shall vanish away; that is, the word of knowledge, peculiarly given by the spirit to some persons only; or that peculiar gift of knowledge of divine things, by which some are qualified to be instructors of others; the present means both of communicating, and of obtaining and increasing knowledge by the preaching and hearing of the word, will be no more.

### V.9

**For we know in part**]; There is an important truth found here, the Word of God is perfect, but we are not. What will eventually happen is that we (the imperfect) will pass away, because we only have partial understanding, but in heaven we will have a complete understanding of those things that we have spoken from the Word of God.

### V.10

**But when that which is perfect is come,**] When perfect knowledge of God, but also the perfect presence of Christ, then all the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven shall be revealed.

**and then that which is in part, shall be done away:** the imperfection of knowledge shall be removed; the imperfect manner of communicating knowledge, and of receiving and acquiring it, will cease, will vanish away, or rather will be perfected, or be swallowed up in perfect knowledge.

### V.11-12

**For now we see in a mirror,**] What a blessing it will be when we come into the perfect presence of Christ, experience His perfect love, and have a perfected mind, body and spirit in the presence of almighty God.

(15.) **Endures all things.**] Bears up under all persecutions and mistreatment from open enemies and professed friends; bears adversities with an open mind, as it submits to every act of God's divine plan, and never says of any trial, affliction, or insult, this cannot be endured.

### III. LOVE HAS PERMANENCE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13

#### V.8

**Love never fails**] It may fail as to the exercise of it, as other graces do; it may be left, but not lost; the fervor of it may be rejected and abandoned; it may grow cold through prevailing sin; but this grace never fails as to its principle; it is an immortal and an incorruptible seed.

**but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail**; by which are meant, either the predictions of future events, not that they shall fail in their accomplishment, but they shall be no more, because they will all be accomplished; or else the gifts of explaining the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of preaching the doctrines of the Gospel, will be no more, because there will be no need of them in a state of perfection:

**whether there are tongues they shall cease**; The gift of speaking with other tongues will cease, there want be a use for such an extraordinary gift in heaven; when probably, and as it is thought by some, there will be but one language, and that the Hebrew language; as the whole earth was of one language and speech before the confusion at Babel:

**Note:** We can't forget that the key to using and benefiting from Spiritual Gifts hinges on the energy behind them; the agape love of God. There is no more important fact in the Bible when it comes to obedient service to the Lord. What ever is done outside of God's love is done in the flesh and selfishly.

### I. LOVE HAS A PRIORITY: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3

1. Even though the gift of tongues is a wonderful spiritual gift that gives us the ability to communicate with God as never before, it is simply a lot of noise if not exercised in love. **V.1a**
2. It is important to remember that we never should exercise any of our spiritual gifts unless they are going to build up the body of Christ. **V.1b**
3. Just as the gift of tongues is an important part of the Christian experience, so is the gift of prophecy. Here Paul is referring to the ability to speak about the future. We can preach, prophecy, proclaim and still it loses its impact if not done in love. **V.2a**
4. Paul goes on here to mention three more gifts, discernment (mysteries), knowledge, faith, all of which are essential in the structure of the local church, but without love, they are meaningless. **V.2b**
5. Paul has mentioned the spiritual, he now speaks about those things which are practical ways that love can benefit the needy, and the hurting. But once again, providing resources, feeding and even physical sacrifice are simply acts of humanity without the love of Christ behind them.

6. What we conclude is that all that we do should be for the purpose of bringing glory to God. **V.3**

## II. LOVE HAS A PURPOSE: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

### V.4

(1.) **Love suffers long**] Has a long mind; to the end of which neither trials, adversities, persecutions, nor provocations, can reach.

(2.) **Is kind**] It is tender and compassionate in itself, and kind and obliging to others; it is mild, gentle, and benign; and, if called to suffer, inspires the sufferer with the most amiable sweetness, and the most tender affection.

(3.) **Love does not envy**] Is not grieved because another possesses a greater portion of earthly, intellectual, or spiritual blessings.

(4.) **Love does not parade itself**] There is a phrase in our own language that expresses what I think to be the meaning of the original, does not set itself forward-does not desire to be noticed or applauded; but wishes that God may be all in all.

(5.) **Is not puffed up**] Is not inflated with a sense of its own importance; for it knows it has nothing but what it has received; and that it deserves nothing that it has got.

### V.5

(6.) **Does not behave rudely**] Love never acts out of its place or character; observes good manners; is never over bearing or brutal; and is always willing to become all things to all men, that it may please them for their good to edification.

(7.) **Does not seek its own**] Doesn't just think of its own spiritual welfare only, but of others also. Love is never satisfied but in the welfare, comfort, and salvation of all.

(8.) **Is not easily provoked**] Is not provoked, is not irritated, is not made sour or bitter.

### V.6

(10.) **Doesn't rejoice in iniquity**] Does not rejoice in falsehood, but on the contrary, rejoices in the truth.

(11.) **But rejoices in the truth**] Every thing that is opposite to lying and irreverence. Those who are filled with the love of God and man rejoice in the extension of Gods divine truth by which peace and good will can be ministered in the earth.

### V.7

(12.) **Bears all things**] This word is also variously interpreted: to endure, bear, sustain, cover, conceal, contain. Many believe that it should be translated covers all things.

(13.) **Believes all things**] Is always ready to believe the best of a person, and does not speak evil of anyone until there is positive evidence.

(14.) **Hopes all things.**] When there is no place left for believing a person is good, then love comes in with its hope, and begins immediately to make allowances and excuses, as far as a good conscience can permit; and anticipates the repentance of the transgressor, and his restoration to the place in the Church from which he had fallen.