

Above Everything Else – Love

1 Peter 4:8-11

On my last teaching from 1 Peter, I covered verses 4-7 of chapter 4 talking about how we are to both live and witness in light of the time in which we live.

But then starting in Vs 8, we see that Peter's greatest exhortation is to love. In fact Peter noted that the priority to love was "above all things".

1 Peter 4:8 (NKJV) And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

- The NIV says most important of all. Have love for one another.

So far in this chapter, Peter has pointed out some very critical things that the believer should be doing. But then here it is as if he is saying. Yet, the number one priority for the believer - is to have love for others.

When Jesus Himself was asked what the greatest command was, He pointed out that it was love.

Matthew 22:36–40 (NKJV) — 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."

Note that Jesus explains that all the teaching of the prophets and the entire law was fulfilled in love.

But don't miss the fact that the command to love others is like or is as important as the command to love God. The reality is that if you are failing to love others, you are also failing to love God.

1 John 4:20–21 (NKJV) — 20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen**, how can he love God whom he has not seen? **21** And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his brother also**.

John reminded us that Love is our witness to the world.

John 13:35 (NKJV) — 35 By this all will know that **you are My disciples**, if you have love for one another.”

Peter says that such a love covers a multitude of sins.

When we love another person, we are willing to overlook their faults. In fact, we really don't even notice those little imperfections.

Proverbs 10:12 (NKJV) — 12 Hatred stirs up strife, **But love covers all sins.**

But when we lack having love for the other person, than every tiny annoyance stands out like a neon sign. This is so evident in marriage relationships where the husband and wife are failing to choose to love each other.

Notice that I didn't say “in marriage relationships in which they have fallen out of love.” Because love is action. Something that you choose to do.

Infatuation is something that you fall in and out of. Because infatuation is based on emotions. But love has little if anything to do with emotions. It is dependent on choice.

In a relationship that is void of love. There will be a continuous battle of finding faults with each other. Allowing resentment and hatred to build up. Whether that is in a marriage or any relationship. It is the same principle.

But when we choose to love according to biblical love (agape love) as described in **1 Cor 13**. Then we stop keeping records of wrong, and stop treating each other rudely. We stop demanding that we be put first. We stop trying to win and have the upper hand. Instead, we put the other person and their needs above our own. we hope and believe the very best about the other person, instead of tearing them down. We are willing to patiently endure every circumstance, instead of looking for a reason to find fault or even lash out.

I challenge you. If you are struggling in your marriage. Or any relationship for that matter. Evaluate your own actions against that of **1 Cor 13:4-8**.

Instead of looking at the actions of the other person. Evaluate your own actions and identify where you are falling short of being loving. Then acknowledge those failures and repent and ask the Lord to help you choose to act in love.

Understand that the Bible tells us in **Roman's 5:5** that God's love has already been placed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. So, it's not a matter of waiting for God to enable us to love with agape love. It is a matter of us choosing to act in accordance with the Love God has already given us. Regardless of how we feel.

A good example of acting out in love regardless of how we feel is shown here in vs 9.

1 Peter 4:9 (NKJV) Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

Earnest love is often put into action through hospitality -

In other words. Being willing to share the blessings that you have with others. Without resentment or grumbling. But with joy. This is an act of love. Now there those with the gift of hospitality. But every believer is called to love and share their abundance with those in need. Whether they are given the gift of hospitality or not.

We have to realize that every blessing we have. Whether our home, or our car or whatever, is merely on loan to us from the Lord. It is not just for our comfort and convenience, but so that we may share with others in need. But we are to do so without complaining or murmuring.

Murmuring would only rob from that gift that is to be offered in love. And all of our murmuring is ultimately against God Himself. Since He is the One who has blessed us with not only the abundance, **but with the opportunity** to share it with others in need.

In the 13th chapter of Hebrews, we are reminded that some have even unknowingly entertained angels by their acts of hospitality.

But there is another opportunity that is discussed in Vs 10, that we often neglect to see as an act of love. Earnest love that is expressed through the use of our spiritual gifts .

1 Peter 4:10 (NKJV) As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

God has given us a variety of spiritual gifts for the purpose of ministering to one another. As is stated in **the ESV** translation –

(ESV) — 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace:

As Spurgeon

“God gives much to us that we may in turn give it to others; it is only meant to run through us as running water through a pipe”.

We are merely a conduit of that spiritual gift. But we are responsible for the stewardship of that gift.

Chuck Smith defined a steward as one who is in charge and oversees the resources of another.

Therefore by that definition we each are responsible to oversee the resources of God’s grace given to us through the use of spiritual gifts.

In other words by stepping out and using the spiritual gifts that we have been entrusted with, for the benefit of the church as a whole. Not for our personal benefit.

Consider the parable of the talents - as an example to warn us of the danger of failing to be a good steward of the opportunities that God gives us.

In the **25th chapter of Matthew** (14-30); we are shown the parable of a man who plans to travel off to a far country. But before he leaves, he puts his goods in the care of his servants according to their own ability. To one servant he gives 5 talents, to another 2, and to the last servant, one talent was given. The first two servants doubled what was given to them, but the last servant who was given the one talent, did nothing other than bury the talent in the ground.

Now we are told that after a long time the master returned to settle the accounts with those servants. The first two servants received the same praise from the master, both receiving the words - ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you

were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

But for the 3rd servant who was an unfaithful steward, there was a much different response: His master called him a wicked and lazy servant, demanding that what he had was to be taken away from him and given to the other servant who was faithful.

Matt 25:29 (NKJV)- 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.'

God's rule for our gifts is that we use them. They are not to be stored away in a show case to be admired, or stored away for a rainy day. They are merely a tool that the Holy Spirit has given us in order to act out in love towards others.

The warning is that when we bury those gifts by not using them, then even what you have been given will be taken away.

A spiritual gift is any talent or ability which is empowered by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being used in the ministry of the church.

I love the fact that Paul calls these gifts – the manifestation of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:7–11 (NKJV) — **7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: **8** for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, **10** to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

Peter encourages us to step out and use each gift given to us in faith and with confidence. Not confidence in ourselves of course, but confidence in knowing that God has chosen to manifest those gifts through us. Think about that – God has chosen to do something supernatural through you.

1 Peter 4:11 (NKJV) If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We are to utilize the gifts with the ability that God has given us. Or as Paul notes – according to the grace given to each of us.

Romans 12:6–8 (NKJV) — 6 Having then gifts **differing according to the grace that is given to us**, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; **7** or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; **8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Whatever the spiritual gift is that the Holy Spirit has given you. You are responsible to be a faithful steward by putting that gift into action, as an act of love towards the body of Christ.

I realize that many do not know what their spiritual gift is. But I ask, are you seeking to discover that gift by asking God to reveal it to you? Sometimes our gifts are only discovered as we step out and serve.

Not seeking to find out what your gift is, and then failing to use it - is the same as taking the talent that the Master has put in your care and burying it in the ground. Thereby, squandering the opportunity to love and edify others.

Remember that Peter noted above all the other things that we are told to do. The greatest and most important of these is to Love with the love that God has already placed in you.

So I encourage you this afternoon. Let God manifest His love through you.

Closing prayer