

1 Corinthians Chapter Thirteen: Paul's Motivation is Love for the Body of Christ

Opening Question: What is the correlation between Paul's words regarding love in 1 Corinthians 13:4 with the behavior being displayed in the Corinthian church?

Key Takeaways:

1. 1 Corinthians 13 contrasts Paul's love for the body with the Corinthians' lack of love for the body.
2. Paul emphasized love as the motivation behind using spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ.
3. Love, by Paul's definition, is the love of Christ for His body which is 100% at the expense of the giver for the benefit of the recipient.
4. The believer's only tangible relationship with Christ is through His body, the church.
5. To sin against the brother is to sin against a member of the body of Christ, and to sin against Christ's body is to sin against Christ.
6. Beginning in Genesis 11, "tongues" are defined as languages.
7. Being found "blameless" in the Day of the Lord means to be found with pure motives.

Discussion Questions:

1. Re-read chapters 1, 2, 4, 8, 12. Now add chapters 13 and 14.
2. Re-read 1 Corinthians 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:7; 5:6; 9:15-16; and 15:31 and contrast 1 Corinthians 13:4 and Paul's motives and actions with the motives and actions of the Corinthians?
3. Discuss the expectation for the believer to love sacrificially in the body of Christ. How does the view of an individual faith apart from the body clash with the fact that to be a Christian is to be a member of Christ's body?

Practical Application:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13 remembering that it is not a stand-alone chapter but fits in Paul's overall argument to the Corinthians. How does Paul continue to stress the importance of the body of Christ in this chapter? Look back through Paul's letter to see where Paul expressed through his motives, words, and actions his love for the body. What was Paul's desire for the Corinthians? See 1 Corinthians 11:1. What were the Corinthians failing to recognize that caused divisions among them? How do these same truths apply to the church today?
2. How can you express love for the body of Christ? What would it look like for you to neglect loving the body? What one question should determine how you behave? What motives should drive this behavior?
3. Practice viewing difficult interactions with other believers through the lens of "this person is a member of Christ's body." How could this truth alter your interaction? Can you recall a time when you have been loved by Christ by being loved by a member, or members, of His body?

Closing Prayer:

Father, Thank You for displaying Your character of compassion, faithfulness, and mercy to us through Your Son and through His body, the church. Our desire is to continue to grow in love for one another as members of Christ's body. May our motives be pure as we use our gifts to build up the body of Christ. Give us the strength to endure difficulties together and the wisdom to encourage one another in our hope in Jesus, until He returns. Amen.