



Silverdale Baptist

VICTORY IN CHAOS #11 ~ LOVE ~ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13 ~ 04/01-02/2023

Main Idea

Love must be our priority. Real love is thoughtful, unselfish, and forgiving.

Getting Started

Name 5 things you love.

What is the difference between how you love your parents and spouse and your favorite dessert?

I love... can mean a lot of different things in English. I love my wife, kids, dog, football, and ice cream. We know the word *love* means something different in each case.

Even when we are talking about loving people, love can mean several different things. So, where do we find clarity and consistency as we define love? The Bible has the answer. The Word of God teaches us how to *love* each other appropriately.

Let's study the *love* chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, and discuss Pastor Tony's message on real *love*.

Learn

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-13.

1. Love must be your priority.

- Words without love are empty.
- Knowledge without love means nothing.
- Sacrifice without love gains nothing.

According to the first three verses, what does not define love?

Discuss how love is more important than beautiful speech, brilliant understanding, and sacrifice.

2. The attributes of real love.

- Real love is thoughtful.
- Real love is unselfish.
- Real love is forgiving.

Now that we know what love is not, what is love, according to verses 4-7?

3. The transforming power of love.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 4:19 and 2 CORINTHIANS 3:18.

What happens when we encounter the love of Christ?

Apply

How is real love demonstrated in relationships, according to these verses?

What needs to happen in your life to stir you to a deeper love relationship with Christ?

How will you demonstrate love to the people around you this week?

What is keeping you from loving well?

What has the Holy Spirit shown you from these verses?

Pray

Father, we love because You first loved us. You changed us from the inside out. You knew we could not love well, so you took out that heart of stone and gave us a heart of flesh. You gave us the Holy Spirit! Thank You. Please teach us to love well. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Unity and diversity must be balanced by maturity, and that maturity comes with love. It is not enough to have the *gift* of the Spirit and *gifts* from the Spirit. We must also have the *graces* of the Spirit as we use our gifts to serve one another.

Maturity: The Graces of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1–13)

It was Jonathan Swift, the satirical author of *Gulliver's Travels*, who said, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another." Spiritual gifts, no matter how exciting and wonderful, are useless and even destructive if they are not ministered in love. In all three of the "body" passages in Paul's letters, there is an emphasis on love. The main evidence of maturity in the Christian life is a growing love for God and for God's people, as well as a love for lost souls. It has well been said that love is the "circulatory system" of the body of Christ.

Few chapters in the Bible have suffered more misinterpretation and misapplication than 1 Corinthians 13. Divorced from its context, it becomes "a hymn to love" or a sentimental sermon on Christian brotherhood. Many people fail to see that Paul was still dealing with the Corinthians' problems when he wrote these words: the abuse of the gift of tongues, division in the church, envy of others' gifts, selfishness (remember the lawsuits?), impatience with one another in the public meetings, and behavior that was disgracing the Lord.

The only way spiritual gifts can be used creatively is when Christians are motivated by love. Paul explained three characteristics of Christian love that show why it is so important in ministry.

Love is enriching (vv. 1–3). Paul named five spiritual gifts: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and giving (sacrifice). He pointed out that, without love, the exercise of these gifts is *nothing*. Tongues apart from love is just a lot of noise! It is love that enriches the gift and that gives it value. Ministry without love cheapens both the minister and those who are touched by it; but ministry with love enriches the whole church. "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

Christians are "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thes. 4:9). God the Father taught us to love by sending His Son (1 John 4:19), and God the Son taught us to love by giving His life and by commanding us to love each other (John 13:34–35). The Holy Spirit teaches us to love one another by pouring out God's love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). The most important lesson in the school of faith is to love one another. Love enriches all that it touches.

Love is edifying (vv. 4–7). "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth [builds up]" (1 Cor. 8:1). The purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of the church (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:3, 5, 12, 17, 26). This means we must not think of ourselves, but of others; and this demands love.

The Corinthians were impatient in the public meetings (1 Cor. 14:29–32), but love would make them long-suffering. They were envying each other's gifts, but love would remove that envy. They were "puffed up" with pride (1 Cor. 4:6, 18–19; 5:2), but love would remove pride and self-vaunting and replace it with a desire to promote others. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

At the "love feast" and the Lord's Table, the Corinthians were behaving in a very unseemly manner. If they had known the meaning of real love, they would have behaved themselves in a manner pleasing to the Lord. They were even suing one another! But love "seeketh not [its] own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5). The phrase *thinketh no evil* means "does

not keep any record of wrongs.” One of the most miserable men I ever met was a professed Christian who actually kept in a notebook a list of the wrongs he felt others had committed against him. Forgiveness means that we wipe the record clean and never hold things against people (Eph. 4:26, 32).

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, yet the Corinthians were boasting about sin in their church (1 Cor. 5). Love “shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Like Noah’s sons, we should seek to hide the sins of others, and then help them make things right (Gen. 9:20–23).

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 carefully and compare this with the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22–23. You will see that all of the characteristics of love show up in that fruit. This is why love edifies: it releases the power of the Spirit in our lives and churches.

Love is enduring (vv. 8–13). Prophecy, knowledge, and tongues were not permanent gifts. (*Knowledge* does not mean “education,” but the immediate imparting of spiritual truth to the mind.) These three gifts went together. God would impart knowledge to the prophet, and he would give the message in a tongue. Then an interpreter (sometimes the prophet himself) would explain the message. These were gifts that some of the Corinthians prized, especially the gift of tongues.

These gifts will fail (be abolished) and cease, but love will endure forever; for “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). The Corinthians were like children playing with toys that would one day disappear. You expect a child to think, understand, and speak like a child; but you also expect the child to mature and start thinking and speaking like an adult. The day comes when he must “put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11).

In the New Testament (which at that time was not completed) we have a complete revelation, but our understanding of it is partial. (Review 1 Cor. 8:1–3 if you think otherwise.) There is a maturing process for the church as a whole (Eph. 4:11–16) and also for the individual believer (1 Cor. 14:20; 2 Peter 3:18). We will not be fully completed until Jesus returns, but we ought to be growing and maturing now. Children live for the temporary; adults live for the permanent. Love is enduring, and what it produces will endure.

Note that all three of the Christian graces will endure, even though “faith will become sight and hope will be fulfilled.” But the greatest of these graces is love; because when you love someone, you will trust him and will always be anticipating new joys. Faith, hope, and love go together, but it is love that energizes faith and hope.

Unfortunately, some of the emphasis today on the Holy Spirit has not been *holy* (because it has ignored Scripture) and has not been *spiritual* (because it has appealed to the carnal nature). We must not tell other believers what gifts they should have or how they can obtain them. This matter is in the sovereign will of God. We must not minimize gifts, but neither should we neglect the *graces* of the Spirit. In my itinerant ministry, I have run across too many local church problems created by people who were zealous for the gifts, but careless of the graces.

Unity—diversity—maturity; and maturity comes through love.¹

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 610–611.