

Revolution – Love is Essential

10/18/20

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

Sunday AM

Love. What comes to mind when you hear this word? It's a topic that's inspired 100's of poems, 1000's of songs, and untold numbers of books – all talking about *this crazy little thing called love*. But what is it really?

I asked a person this week this question and they said, ***Love is what makes the world go round***. True, love may make the world go round, but as my dad would say, ***so too does a big swallow of tobacco juice!***

Yet the truth is – the idea of love can be a bit elusive. I read a story about a pastor who preached one Sunday evening on love and how this world needs more love. The next day, he had some concrete poured for a new patio behind his house. But before the concrete could set, some neighborhood kids decided they'd leave their handprints in the wet cement. When the pastor caught them in the act, he angrily yelled at them. "Get out of here!" Noticing his hateful attitude, his wife said, "Didn't you just preach a sermon last night on how to be loving to others! You didn't show much love to those kids!" He replied, "What I meant was I love people in the abstract, but not in concrete!"

Isn't this the problem many of us face? We like the idea of love – loving people in the abstract," but when it comes right down to loving people in the concrete – loving them when it matters, we might still be lacking.

This AM, I want us to look at passage that's likely very familiar to all of us from **1 Corinthians 13**. It's a passage we've likely heard recited 100's of times at weddings and from pulpits concerning the idea of love.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices w/ the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails... Now these (3) remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

When Paul penned these words to the Corinth, he was addressing a real problem w/in the church – they claimed to believe in God yet their loveless actions spoke to the contrary.

Truth is – b/c God is love – if we're His children, then we should love as He loved us. Yet sadly, I fear we sometimes find it can be easier to be orthodox than to be loving... and easier to be busy in ministry instead of being loving in relationships.

Jesus was clear in **John 13:34-35** – *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Consider His words in the Great Commandment found in **Matthew 22:27-40**: *Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, w/ all your soul, and w/ all your mind. This is the 1st and greatest commandment. The 2nd is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

All this to say – the essential attitude, action, and aim of any Jesus-follower is to personally experience God's love and then to show/share His love w/ others.

Of course, it's w/out question, in light of the difficulty w/in our country, the divide w/in our communities, and the disparity even w/in our churches – that the missing ingredient in our lives is the **true love of God**.

When the Bible speaks of love, it does so w/ precision. The Greek language is quite depictive using (4) distinct words in *koine* Greek to assist us in understanding love – *storge*, *eros*, *phileo*, and *agape*.

storge – refers to a friendly affection/preference focused on what you like about someone/something. Example – *I love her haircut* or *I love ice cream*.

eros – refers to a romantic, intimate kind of love

phileo – refers to a family/brotherly love – and is the height of human affection. It's a genuine love for others expressed in care/compassion for them.

agape – refers to a self-sacrificing or God-inspired love. It's a love that can only be expressed by God loving thru you by the H.S. living in you.

This is the kind of love God gave to us thru Christ and that He expects us to give to others.

Starting today, I'd like to invite you on a *50-day journey of love* – to learn how to love God, to love one another, to love ourselves, and to even love our enemies. Here in **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**, Paul wants us to realize that love (God's love) is essential to life.

I Love is More Essential than What We **SAY**

If I speak in the tongues of men/angels, but do not have love, I'm only a resounding gong/clanging cymbal.

While there's some debate on the idea of speaking in tongues, I believe Paul was saying that whether spoken by men or men under the influence of the H.S. that words (teachings) are nothing but empty talk and white noise unless they're motivated by God's love.

Quite simply – the greatest truths spoken in the most eloquent/creative ways – if not spoken thru God's love – are meaningless/unfruitful – and even harmful.

One of my favorite stories is about a college Lit. prof who liked to travel to county fairs where he'd recite famous speeches/passages. W/ his deep, melodious voice, he'd leave people spellbound by his flawless monologues. One evening, after finishing a piece to a standing ovation, the prof asked the audience if they had any requests? An old pastor asked if the prof would quote the 23rd Psalm? The prof agreed, but only if after he quoted it, the old pastor would quote it too. The prof began – *The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want...* and it was beautiful. Everyone present, hung on every word. When he concluded, the crowd erupted to a standing ovation. The prof then gave the mic to the pastor. As he approached the mic, in a worn raspy voice from yrs of preaching – he began to speak from his heart – *The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters He restores my soul...* As he completed the final words – *Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever* – there was only stunned silence! No one spoke. No one moved. The only sound was that of people sniffing fighting back tears. As the old pastor sat down, the wise prof stood up and said... “Do you know what just happened? Do you understand the difference? I know the 23rd Psalm; but friends, this man knows the shepherd!”

It takes more than speaking the truth to communicate truth – it requires an intimate love for God/others.

II Love is More Essential than What we **KNOW**

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Paul mentions 3 spiritual gifts – *prophecy, knowledge, and faith*. **Prophecy** refers to the ability to know and deliver God's truth in a powerful way. **Knowledge** involves a deep insight into God's Word. And **faith** is the unique ability to know/trust God in all things.

Each of these gifts are about knowing God and His will – and then living out the faith in one's daily life.

Paul is saying – if you had all wisdom/insight, and could understand and give clarity to others in any circumstance, but you missed out or excluded God's love – then you're bankrupt and missed the point.

You may be Mortar Board, Phi Beta Kappa, a Mensa member, a genius, or a walking encyclopedia. You might be smarter than the avg. bear w/ incredible clarity in math/science, or lit/history. Yet, if you're missing love – if **God's love** is not the motivating factor in your life, then all you know is worthless b/c brilliance w/out love equals zero – zilch – zip – nada.

Rick Warren noted – We live in a world where knowledge is exploding. It doubles about every 6 yrs in our society. We're smarter than we've ever been before than any other generation; yet we still have the same old problems of war, prejudice, terrorism, crime, abuse, hatred, and violence. Why? B/c what the world needs isn't more knowledge; it needs more love. W/out love, nothing I say will matter. W/out love, nothing I know will matter. W/out love, nothing I do will really matter. B/c all the knowledge in the world can't compensate for genuine, God-honoring love.

III Love is More Essential than What we **GIVE**

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship so I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing...

Can we give w/ selfish/self-seeking motives? Sure. B/c giving isn't necessarily always loving. Many of us give for what we can get in return – but that's not love! To do/give just so we can receive – that's selfishness.

Truth is – some people give out of **guilt** to assuage their conscious trying to make up for something they did in the past. Some give to gain **control** over others – to get them to do what they want. Some people give for prestige, glory, honor, power, or position b/c their looking for some means to feel valuable/important – this is the trap Ananias/Sapphira fell into in Acts 5. It was if they wanted a little plague that read, "Look at us! We're special b/c of what we were able to give!" ***But that's not why we should give.***

God wants us to give b/c of His love for us and our love for Him – this is the kind of giving that brings joy into our own lives. We give b/c God has given to us. We give b/c we can't contain what God's given to us.

Listen to Jesus – Give, and it'll be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For w/ the measure you use, it'll be measured to you. Luke 6:38

Jesus said this to remind us that love is essential for life. But not just any love we can manufacture – it must be His love in us flourishing and flowing thru us.

Consider the power of numbers. What do you get when you add $10 + 15$? (25). Now, suppose we multiply 10×15 ? (150). But what if the numbers were big – like we multiply $1,000,000 \times 1000 = 1$ bil. What's bigger than bil.? A tril.! What's higher than a tril.? A quadrillion. Then a quintillion (1 w/ 18 zeroes). So, to make our point – if you multiply 25 quintillion $\times 0$... what do you get? 0! If we multiplied 100 quintillion $\times 0$... Still – 0. B/c it doesn't matter what you start w/ on the left – if the number on the right is zero, the answer will always be ZERO. (Leith Anderson)

God is saying life w/out His love is 0. You can pile up all the good deeds, knowledge, and gifts you'd like. You can be beautiful, strong, wealthy, famous – but w/out God's love in you serving as the motivating factor thru you – your life will always equal – 0.