

“But The Greatest Of These Is Love”

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September 24, 2006

“Son now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:13)

Read 1 Cor. 12:31-14:1

I cannot think of a more powerful chapter within the letter of 1 Corinthians than chapter 13. Everything boils down to this one action. Love does cover a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8). What God declared in Isaiah 53 and displayed in Matthew 27 is defined in 1 Corinthians 13. First Corinthians is nothing less than an unveiling in words the person of Jesus Christ. If one were to simply replace the word “love” with Christ or grace, it would be equally true. We cannot forget the underlying problem in the Corinthian fellowship. People were being divisive, factious, and bitter (1:10-13; 11:17-22). The pettiness that exists in our and all fellowships is disheartening. Love would not tolerate gossip, fault finding, or negativity. Love does not judge others for their poor performance or failure to conform. Love embraces, encouraged, edifies, and sustains. Why does love do this? Because this is what Christ did, does, and will do.

The chapter has three distinct movements. Verses 1 through 3 give the necessity of love. Without love no action is of profit. Verses 4 through 7 give the quality of love and verses 8 through 13 give the priority of love.

Today’s church has underestimated these qualities of biblical love. Love as we know it is a mere shadow of what it should be. When real love is displayed, it is viewed as heroic, rare, and an anomaly. Because we do not value love, we end up not knowing the power of biblical love. When biblical love is shown it is considered a waste of resources (Mark 14:4; Luke 7:36-39). Biblical love threatens the non-committed. Biblical love cannot help but put others first. Biblical love is compelling. Those who love, serve. Those who love, obey. Serving and obeying are not burdens to be born. Love is the parent of many offspring. If love does not birth the child, then serving and obeying become cruel masters.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of love is its ability to identify. Consider with me John 13:34 and 35.

³⁴ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35).

Nowhere else is such a statement made concerning the believer. It is our love for each other that sets us apart. Matthew 7:15 and following tells us that we will know others by their fruit. Remember, love is the parent of many children.

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Love's offspring looks like mercy, kindness, tenderness, gentleness, etc. It is God's love in us that He is working through us to those around us. Without God's love we have nothing to offer anyone.

It is my desire that as a fellowship we would be a people marked by biblical love. It is impossible to love too much. Never think that in all of your loving you have gone too far. Friends, we have never gone far enough. May it please the Father to make us a people of love.