

A More Excellent Way

Thank Jonathan and Ginny Pray

I want to thank Dave for preaching on the Holy Spirit over the last few weeks.

I have been impressed that one of the working of the Holy Spirit in my life, or our lives is to love. The early church was marked by two things, abstaining from sexual sin and demonstrating love towards one another.

Francis Shaffer has stated that the Mark of a Christian is love.

Where did this need for love come from?

God Created

1 John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness:

As a Man created in the image of God, I have an inbred need to love, but because of sin this love is distorted, corrupted by the lusts of the world.

God desires a pure love.

God Commanded

The greatest commandment is?

Matthew 22:37 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'

What is the second greatest?

Matthew 22:39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

What command did Jesus give us as His disciples?

John 15:12 - 17 "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³"Greater love has no one than this; that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would

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remain, so whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷This I command you, that you love one another.

As a Christian, a person who has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, I have three commands to Love.

So what is this Love (Agape), that God has commanded us to demonstrate?

Before I let the Word answer that question, what does the world teach us about Love?

Webster's Dictionary defines love as a strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties, an attraction based on sexual desire, an affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests.

If we listen to the movies, television or the radio, the world has the same question, and comes up with an answer close to Webster's definition.

Think of our songs in the world, they are replete with the idea of love. The Beatle's in the 60's – all you need is love, Journey in the 70's – I want to know what love is - Rihanna - We Found Love, Adele - Make You Feel My Love, of today.

So what is this thing called love (Cole Porter – 30's)?

From what I have shared, from Webster's Dictionary and common songs, I believe that the World teaches us that Love is a strong affection, attraction towards another, with some thought that we will get something in return.

God Clarified

The Word teaches us something more complete about Love.

I believe that this passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians 13 describes love and the attitude of loving better than any other passage in the Bible; although 1 John 4 comes in a close second and I would recommend reading it soon.

So what is Paul, as he is being directed by the Holy Spirit, telling the believers in this passage on what love is, this loving of others not ourselves or our pleasures. I must remind you that Paul is talking to Christians, not to those that do not know Christ.

¹If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

"If I" – let us put ourselves in each of these statements.

When looking at this statement, the "tongues of men" is to be talking with eloquence. And speaking with the "tongues of angels", is speaking with the

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authority of God. Everywhere I look in the Bible on when angels speak, they are speaking a known language, but they are speaking for God and with His authority. So, if I am standing up here, preaching the Word of God without LOVE, what I am saying should be coming across as annoying as the cymbals over here being “banged”, just for the sake of banging them. And if it is not annoying before men because they do not know that I am not speaking in Love, it will be clanging before God and He will take every word into account.

²If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Paul is addressing 4 different things in our demonstration of our relationship with Christ.

The first is prophecy. Prophecy is two-fold, it is for telling (making future events known) and forth telling, declaring the Word of God. Look at the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament), they addressed the people with “thus says the Lord” and then usually addressed the sin of the people that was causing a separation between them and God.

So, if we are sharing the word we are actually performing one of the functions of a prophet. So am I sharing Christ out of self or love?

The second thing he addresses is mysteries. Do we like to know mysteries, of course, especially if we know the answer to the mystery? You may say what mystery do I know, and I would say that if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, that means you have trusted Him for your salvation, you know a mystery. This is shown in the Nicene Creed.

Nicene Creed I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

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And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

This is the greatest mystery; that God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins, and He gave the Holy Spirit to dwell in us when we put our Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Not only that, but we are made children of God when this happens. If you have not experienced this great mystery, a personal relationship with the God of the universe, and you would like to become a child of God, I invite you to come up after the message and let's talk.

Thirdly, Paul addresses knowledge. Remember that the Pharisees and Sadducees had all knowledge, or were studying to obtain "all" knowledge. They were spiritual "know it all's".

Paul tells us earlier in 1 Corinthians, 8:1 b – that knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies, so knowledge is not the important issue, but love is.

Lastly, we look at faith, Jesus had said that if we had the faith of a mustard seed, we could tell that mountain to be uprooted and be thrown into the sea; Paul is saying that without love that kind of faith is nothing.

I believe that what God is saying through Paul about prophecy, mystery, knowledge and faith, is that when we operate in the flesh, not out of love generated by the Holy Spirit, so that others are impressed (you and I may be impressed with what we do), but God is not impressed. As a matter of fact, we are useless.

³And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Give and surrender, these are things of a "higher" love, but not of the highest love. Giving and surrendering can demonstrate our love, but they also may demonstrate our lack of love, it can indicate a deep selfishness because of our need to be recognized for what we have done.

In conclusion for the first three thoughts, if we do everything without love, we are obnoxiously noisy nobodies who will get nothing in return.

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So now we turn to what love is. Paul is going to tell us what God's definition of love is. He points out 15 facets of love. Just like a diamond will have different "cuts" to show the brilliance of the diamond, these different aspects will show the brilliance of love. Diamonds have to be "shaped" or chipped to show off their brilliance, they are not in the rough, so we too have to be shaped to love properly. Let us look at what the Word teaches us about love

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails;

Galatians 5:16 – 23 *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For ³²the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Patient Kind *to show one's self mild, to be kind, use kindness*

Not Jealous *to be heated or to boil with envy, hatred, anger - to envy*

Does not brag *to boast one's self - a self display, employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one's self excessively*

Is not arrogant *to inflate, blow up, to cause to -swell up - to puff up, make proud - to be puffed up, to bear one's self loftily, be proud*

⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

Does not act unbecomingly – *Love is careful not to pass the bounds of decency; it treats all with respect.*

Does not seek its own – *In examining your life, what does it mean when you are seeking your own? For me it means I do things to manipulate people to fulfill my desires.*

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Is not provoked - *Do I provoke others or allow myself to be provoked. A glass of sugar water no matter how much it is shaken will only spill sugar water.*

Does not take into account a wrong suffered – *Do I keep a ledger of things done wrong to me, not just the perceived wrong but actual wrongs done that cause me to suffer?*

⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

This is the first time that Paul is comparing and contrasting an attitude in love.

Does not rejoice in unrighteousness –

Romans 6:12 – 15 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

To rejoice in unrighteousness is to take pleasure in sin.

Rejoice with the truth

Jesus said I am the way, the truth and the life, do I rejoice in this?

⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

ALL THINGS

Bears all things

Believes all things

Hopes all things

Endures all things

Love never fails

Example of my friend of 35 years loving his wife

Example of another friend's response when His wife said she did not love him anymore.

⁸Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*

Prophecy, tongues and knowledge are there to bring us to Christ, to continue to draw us to Christ, to build us up in Christ.

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⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Paul is making a statement that I think includes you and me. He states that we know and prophesy in part. If we have identified with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our very lives become a prophesy before the World. And when the perfect has come all of the other things will be done away, they will be useless.

¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

How does a child look at things?

Example of advertisement of mom sending a copy of a check to the bank then taking a picture of a lion, daughter freaks out.

The world's definition of love is childish; the Lord's definition of love is for the mature. If we are growing in Christ, we will be putting away the childish notions of love and embracing the Lord's attitude towards love.

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Enigma – (Webster's) something hard to understand or explain. The Bible defines this word as a riddle.

Example of young scarred woman receiving plastic surgery.

God created us for love, Satan, the ruler of this world has taught and is teaching us a distorted view of this love (he is the father that scarred us). So we, who know Christ, need to put ourselves under the surgical hand of our adopted father that he may make straight and clear what the evil one has distorted and corrupted.

¹³But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

When we get to heaven we will not need faith or hope because we will be with Jesus and God. We will see face to face and all we will experience is the Glory and Honor of being able to worship the Creator and enter into Love everlasting.

Let me read through 1 Corinthians 13 again, close your eyes and listen.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have JESUS, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have

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JESUS, I am nothing. ³And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have JESUS, it profits me nothing. ⁴ JESUS is patient, JESUS is kind *and* is not jealous; JESUS does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ JESUS never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. ¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. ¹³But now faith, hope, JESUS, abide these three; but the greatest of these is JESUS.

I don't honestly think after studying about Love (Agape), that I could ever tell anyone that I don't love them. Since love is not a feeling but is expressed through action.

I can say that I choose not to love you, in other words that I will not be patient, I will not be kind, I will be jealous, I will brag, I will be arrogant, I will act unbecomingly, I will seek my own, I will be provoked, I will take into account a wrong suffered, I will rejoice in unrighteousness, I will not rejoice in the truth, I will not bear, believe, hope or endure all things, I will let the love of Jesus in me fail those who are around me. But for me that would mean denying the work that Jesus has done in my life in loving me, and denying the inclination of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the love of the Son, Jesus and God the Father toward you, my brothers and sisters in the Lord.

I leave you with this challenge out of the word:

1 John 3:18 Little children, let us not love in word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Let's pray.