

Riverview Baptist Church
February 14, 2016
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
“What This World Needs Is Love!”

Memory Verse:

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

Today we will discuss a topic on everyone’s mind because of the Valentine’s holiday. It is easy and fun to think about the romantic love between a man and a woman. But we all realize that there is a place in life for equally important types of love. Paul wants the Corinthian Christians to remember that giftedness that comes through the Holy Spirit is not the measure of maturity, the display of mature Christian love is. We learned in Galatians that our maturity is a reflection of our walking in the Spirit. The Spirit leads us to love other people. Today we learn again about the true nature of Christian love for other people.

Paul is using the Greek word *agape*. The ancient Greeks had four different words we translate *love*. It is important to understand the difference between the words, and why the apostle Paul chose the Greek word *agape* here.

- i. *Eros* was one word for love. It described, as we might guess from the word itself, *erotic* love. It refers to sexual love.
- ii. *Storge* was the second word for love. It refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general.
- iii. *Philia* is the third word for love. It speaks of a brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. It might be described as the highest love of which man, without God’s help, is capable of.
- iv. *Agape* is the fourth word for love. It is a love that loves without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. *Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given. It gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive. According to Alan Redpath, we get our English word *agony* from *agape*. “It means the actual absorption of our being in one great passion.” (Redpath) Strictly speaking, *agape* can’t be defined as “God’s love,” because men are said to *agape* sin and the world (John 3:19; 1 John 2:15). But it can be defined as a sacrificial, giving, absorbing, love. The word has little to do with emotion; it has much to do with self-denial for the sake of another.

Ask the students to prioritize the most important aspects of the life of a mature Christian. Where did love rank on the list?

1. **Supremacy of Love Described:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Love reigns supreme in the life of a mature Christian!
 - a. Love is superior to every other gift of God. There is no giftedness (skill), or fruit that the Holy Spirit gives that is more important than love.
 - b. Love is superior to any work done for God. Every work done for Jesus must be done for Jesus in love in order to be a spiritual work. If you do a good thing with the wrong attitude, it really isn’t good in the eyes of God.

Can you describe a time when you had someone do a good thing for you but did it in a really bad attitude? Have you ever done this? How was it received? What did you learn about love?

2. **Sweetness of Love Defined:** 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 So people are continually confusing the emotion of love with the action of love. Love can sometimes be felt. But mature Christian love is far more than a feeling.

a. **Positive Definition:** Love is Action not feelings!

*we see **love** is described by action words, not by ethereal concepts. Paul is not writing about how love feels, he is writing about how it can be seen in action. True love is always demonstrated by action.*

- i. **Patient:** *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).* If God's love is in us, we will be longsuffering to those who annoy us and hurt us.
- ii. **Kind:** Gentle handling of issues and people is important in demonstrating love. Sharp words and brisk action can ruin relationships. Kindness flows from compassion for the situation of others.
- iii. **Rejoices with the truth:** This means that we allow people to tell us the truth even when it is hard. And it also means that we tell the truth even when it may be to our advantage not to do so. This doesn't mean telling everyone everything we know or betraying valued and well placed confidences. Truth is your friend when you seek to be loving.

Charles Spurgeon calls these next four characteristics, "Loves' Four Sweet Companions":

- iv. **Always protects:** Strong: "Love covers; that is, it never proclaims the errors of good men. There are busybodies abroad who never spy out a fault in a brother but they must needs hurry off to their next neighbour with the savoury news, and then they run up and down the street as though they had been elected common criers. It is by no means honorable to men or women to set up to be common informers. Yet I know some who are not half so eager to publish the gospel as to publish slander. Love stands in the presence of a fault, with a finger on her lip." (Spurgeon)
- v. **Always trusts:** Believing
- vi. **Always hopes:** Hopeful: Love has a confidence in the future, not pessimism. When hurt, it does not say, "It will be this way for ever, and even get worse." It hopes for the best, and it hopes in God.
- vii. **Always perseveres:** Enduring
- viii. **Never Fails:** There is nothing stronger than love. When God loved us even before we sinned, he sent Jesus to the cross to demonstrate that love. The cross was intended to be an end. It looked like the end. But love did not fail! The resurrection proves to power of God's love. It also gives the victory to us in loving those who may not accept our love. We can love because of resurrection power, the power of Jesus!

b. **Negative Definition:** Love is not

- i. **Envious:** "Many persons cover a spirit of envy and uncharitableness with the name of godly zeal and tender concern for the salvation of others; they find fault with all; their spirit is a spirit of universal censoriousness; none can please them; and every one suffers by them. These destroy more souls by tithing mint and cumin, than others do by neglecting the weightier matters of the law. Such persons have what is termed, and very properly too, *sour godliness.*" (Clarke)

- ii. **Boasting:** Parading itself? Love in action can work anonymously. It does not have to have the limelight or the attention to do a good job, or to be satisfied with the result. Love gives because it loves to give, not out of the sense of praise it can have from showing itself off.
- iii. **Proud:** It speaks of someone who has a “big head.” Love doesn’t get it’s head swelled, it focuses on the needs of others.
- iv. **Rude:** The act of being inconsiderate of others and acting on your initial impulses without regard for how it may affect those around you.
- v. **Self-Seeking:** Paul communicates the same idea in [Romans 12:10](#): *in honor giving preference to one another*. Also, [Philippians 2:4](#) carries the same thought: *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*. This is being like Jesus in a most basic way, being an *others-centered* person instead of a *self-centered* person.
- vi. **Easily Angered:** Short, hair triggered temper.
- vii. **Keeper of wrongs:** Literally, this means, “love does not store up the memory of any wrong it has received.” Love will put away the hurts of the past instead of clinging to them. One writer tells of a tribe in Polynesia, where it was customary for each man to keep some reminders of his hatred for others. These reminders were suspended from the roofs of their huts to keep alive the memory of the wrongs, real or imagined. Most of us do the same.
- viii. **Does not delight in evil:** Some Christians are thrilled to be around very sinful people and things. We are not to delight in being around evil or doing evil. Love does not abide where sin reigns unchecked.

How does this description compare to the list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5?

- 3. Supernatural Love is Eternal: It will outlast all the gifts! Verses 9-13
 - a. Love is always appropriate and will never be outgrown.
 - i. Illustration of a child: Spiritual gifts are appropriate for this age of Christian life. They will be outgrown in eternity. But the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, will not be outgrown or left behind.

What other things will not be in heaven? What will be in heaven? Love goes with us into eternity. Of all the descriptions of heaven, it is a place of pure and neve ending love!

- b. Love is the Greatest Gift:
 - i. Love is greatest because it will continue, even grow, in the eternal state. When we are in heaven, **faith** and **hope** will have fulfilled their purpose. We won’t need **faith** when we see God face to face. We won’t need to **hope** in the coming of Jesus once He comes. But we will always **love** the Lord and each other, and grow in that **love** through eternity.
 - ii. **Love** is also the greatest because it is an attribute of God ([1 John 4:8](#)), and faith and hope are not part of God’s character and personality. God does not have **faith** in the way we have **faith**, because He never has to “trust” outside of Himself. God does not have **hope** the way we have **hope**, because He knows all things and is in complete control. But God is love, and will always be love.

Apply

How can I love people with a mature Christian love? You must know Jesus as your Lord and savior! 1John 4:19 NKJV - *We love Him because He first loved us.* You can love people with the love you have experienced in Jesus. The love you received in Jesus, you now can share from Jesus to others. You get to love other people with Jesus' love!

- Do you know the love of Jesus?
- Is there someone in your life that needs to experience Jesus' love?
- What ways can you show them His love?
- What is it that is keeping you from being full of mature Christian love?