**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**What Does It Mean To Love (Part 2)**

Last week on our program we asked the question, “what does it mean to love?” The view that many people have of love is that it is a sentimental feeling toward another that just happens. They believe it is something we can fall into and we can fall out of. Last week we began looking at the Biblical definition of love. We mentioned that there are four Greek words for “to love” and the most common Greek word in the New Testament for “love” is *agape.* In reading the New Testament we learned that agape is not only a state of the feelings and emotions, but a state of the intellect or will. It is a choice. The fact that it is commanded tells us that love is something we can choose to have. It is not an unsought emotional response, but it is something into which we will ourselves. It is the decision to care for another and to seek his highest good.

We also learned that agape is a love we can choose to have even for the unlovely. You see, we are commanded to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44). In other words, there are those whom I may not be able to develop an emotional affection for because of the evil they have meted out against me and my family, but I can still love them and care for them. I can still desire what is in their best interest.

And we also learned last week that agape is active. Love is not just a feeling in the heart or a thought of the mind, but rather true love will be demonstrated in action toward the one loved. As someone said, “Love is what you do, not what you feel.” Love for God means we keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). Love for our brethren means we will act in their best interest. John says in 1 John 3:17-18, *“But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

We want to continue our study of what the Bible says about love.

But we cannot give a complete Biblical definition of love without studying 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Today we want to look at this great chapter on love. 1 Corinthians 13 is a continuation of the subject that was begun in chapter 12. In chapter 12, the apostle Paul introduced the subject of spiritual gifts. There were problems in the Corinthian church because some who had greater gifts were disregarding the usefulness of those who had lesser gifts. The gifts were not the problem, but their attitude toward the gifts was the problem. Paul shows that these gifts, however various they were, were conferred in such a manner as to promote the edification and welfare of the church. In verse 31 he says, *“But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”* This more excellent way is love, which he describes in chapter 13. The desire for spiritual gifts and the use of them were to be tempered with love. Only by allowing love to live in their hearts and rule in their lives could they overcome their problems.

In verses 1-3 of chapter 13 Paul talks about the necessity of love. In verses 4-7 he gives us the characteristics of love, and then in verse 8-13 he talks about the permanence of love.

First the necessity of love – he says, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”* If I am eloquent in speech, or if I am a great orator when I preach the word of God, but I do not have love, I am just a lot of noise. If I have a thorough knowledge of the Bible such that I am able to expound on any passage of scripture, but I do not have love, I am nothing. If I am generous with my money, and I give my body to be burned in service to God, but have no love, it profits me nothing. Love is essential if we are to please God and go to heaven.

And then in verses 4-7 he gives us the characteristics of love. Paul says, *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”* Here Paul shows us how love is exemplified. He shows the effect love has in one’s conduct toward others. If we love, this is how we will behave.

Love suffers long. Love is patient. This means that love will endure the injuries and insults of others without giving place to wrath and bitterness. Instead of striking back out of anger, love harbors no resentment and causes us to be patient toward others and willing to forgive. Love is kind. This means goodness of heart, gentle. It means to be gracious, pleasant and courteous to others. It involves doing good even to those who irritate us. Love does not envy. Love is not jealous. Sometimes we are spiteful and short with others because they have something we want. They may have a relationship we desire to have. They may have a quality about them we don’t have and we are resentful of them because of it. Love does not do that. It does not resent others because they have something it does not have. Love does not parade itself. In other words love does not boast of one’s own excellences. And then Paul says, love is not puffed up. This is to be puffed up with pride. One who loves is not inflated with a sense of his own importance, rather he humbles himself. What this is saying is that love is not boastful, arrogant, or conceited. Love will keep a person from being boastful and from feeling a sense of superiority or personal greatness because of position, possessions or personal achievements. Love does not behave rudely. The NASV translates “does not act unbecomingly.” There are certain forms of behavior which are improper and indecent. Love does not behave improperly. Rather it seeks that which is becoming in circumstances in which we are placed in life. When someone cuts me off in traffic, or cuts in line at a grocery store, love will act properly. Love is polite and courteous and is not rude in these circumstances. Love does not seek its own. Love is not selfish. It does not seek its own happiness to the injury of others. Love will be willing to sacrifice what it wants to provide what is in the best interest of the other person. Love is not provoked. Love is not excited to violent anger. It is not its character to be hasty, excited, or passionate. One who loves governs his passions, restrains his temper, subdues his feelings. In other words he will exercise self-control of his spirit when provoked. Proverbs 16:32 says, *“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”*

We see in Jesus the supreme example of One who was not provoked by attacks on His person. 1 Peter 2:23 says concerning Jesus, *“when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”*

Love thinks no evil. Again the NASV translates “does not take into account a wrong suffered.” The idea is that love makes not memorandum of evil done to itself. Here is a husband and wife arguing, and the wife begins to bring up all his failures and faults since they got married. Love doesn’t do that. Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Love does not rejoice in the wrongdoing committed by others. It does not take delight when others commit sin. It does not find pleasure in hearing others accused of sin. It does not desire that an enemy should do evil and thereby ruin himself. Rather, love rejoices in the truth. Love is truly concerned about the spiritual welfare of others and, therefore, rejoices when truth is embraced and rules supreme in the lives of men. Love bears all things. Love bears under for the welfare of others. Love believes all things. This is saying that love believes the best about another. It will give a person the benefit of the doubt. When a report comes in about someone and there are two ways to take it, love demonstrates itself by saying, “I am going to take it the best way possible.”

Love hopes all things. Love hopes all is well. Love will hold on to this hope until all possibility of such has vanished. When there is evidence that one has sinned, love hopefully anticipates his repentance. Love will “hope,” anticipate that all will turn our well. And love endures all things. Love endures persecution and adversity, and is not driven from the true course by the wrong and injuries of the wicked. When we truly love another, we will continue to work for his good, no matter how much evil we may have suffered at his hands.

These are the characteristics of love. These are characteristics divinely given. And these characteristics are not lofty ideals to be admired, but they are practical ideas to be applied in our homes, communities, and churches. I need to ask myself, do these characteristics of love characterize me? To test whether or not love is expressed in our lives, a good practice is to read this passage and instead of reading “love is,” read “I am.” For example, I suffer long and am kind. I do not envy. I do not boast. I am not arrogant. I do not behave rudely. I am not selfish, etc. And as I do this and I see where I am failing, and I know where I need to change. Since love is commanded of us these are the characteristics we must strive to implement in our lives if we are to be pleasing to God.

And then in verses 8-13 in 1 Cor. 13 Paul emphasizes the permanence of love. In verse 8 he says, *“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”* In other words, the spiritual gifts would eventually cease, but love would never cease. Love never fails. Love is eternal. In verse 13 it says, *“And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

Love is not some sentimental, feeling that comes and goes. That may be true of infatuation or lust, but not love. Love is a choice. May we choose to show love.

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