

Parson to Person
1 Corinthians 13
(The Greatest: Love) Part 2

“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.

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. 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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:1–13).

Love and Hate

Paul provided a partial list of a few key attributes of agape love in order to counter balance the disposition of the very carnal Corinthians. His list was a reminder that believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, are to be other-centered, patient, kind, longsuffering, etc. However, Paul also knew that love is disciplinary (see Hebrews 12:5–11), hates what harms (see Proverbs 6:16–19), and is commanded of believers (see Romans 12:9). We must love what is right—and hate what is evil. We must hate the adversary. We are to hate all that is evil. Sympathy with evil is a trap—a stronghold for the enemy!

Hate Sin, Hate Self, Love God

The opposite of genuine agape love is not hate. The opposite of agape love is self. Those who are unwilling to address and/or expose evil are generally self-protective. Those who *glory* in addressing error are generally unkind and impatient. Therefore, love, true agape love, does not parade itself, is temperate, and slow to make judgment. However, true agape love is willing to address and/or confront while denying personal pride, boasting of personal sinlessness and shortcoming, and is therefore willing to deny self in order to “*abhor what is evil*” (Romans 12:9) and “*rejoice in the truth*” (vs. 6).

True love is self-denying. True love is God honoring. True love is sin despising. True love, at work in the believer, flows from humility and a teachable disposition.

The Nature of Jesus' Love

True love, as manifested in Jesus, serves to fertilize, water, and produce the fruit of righteousness in the humble but is offensive to the proud. Therefore, we are wise to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (see 1 Peter 5:5–6).

The love of Jesus breaks up the fallow ground of our hearts by water of the word and the plow of conviction—in grace and truth. We are wise to submit to the truth and enjoy the benefits.

True love, as manifested in Jesus, is patient and kind to the humble and broken—but knows the boundaries of grace. True love manifests in judgment with those unwilling to humbly surrender!

John the Baptist recognized this saying, “*A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory*” (Matthew 12:20). The fact that there will be a day of reckoning when “*He sends forth justice to victory*” should encourage us all to live in harmony with Him.

Those who know they are “*poor in spirit*” (Matthew 5:3) come humbly before the Lord. “*The one who comes to [Him in humility] will by no means [be] cast out*” (Matthew 6:37). “*The Lord lifts up the humble; [but] He casts the wicked down to the ground*” (Psalm 147:6). “*The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord raises those who are bowed down; the Lord*

loves the righteous” (Psalm 146:8). Therefore, *“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up”* (James 4:10).

With all this in mind, may I say, Paul’s list here in 1 Corinthians 13 is a one-sided correction of the Corinthian self. It is an injunction to live, in agape love, before the Lord.

What Love Looks Like (Part 2)

It will serve us well to examine the attributes of love contained in this passage.

“Love Suffers Long”

Love is patient related to the shortcomings of others. Love is longsuffering as difficulties are endured. Love is not sensitive to nor concerned about time invested while waiting on discoveries, solutions, consequences, or judgments. Love trusts the Lord for His overarching care, concern, and leadership of our lives. God can be trusted and will provide rest to those who put their trust in Him.

However, love is protective of others. Love must intervene at the right times, in the right way, if and when protections are required. Love does not fail to inform of error or warn others of acts and/or attitudes that harm or may harm. Love does not withhold righteous judgment or consequences that may be required—when required.

Personally biased and/or selfishly motivated judgments are not the fruit of love. Interventions and interactions must

never be motivated by a lack of patience, personal vindication, or vengeance. Vengeance belongs to the Lord. Those filled with the Spirit and functioning in love are longsuffering and patient.

“Love is Kind”

Love is gentle and gracious. Love desires to benefit others. Love is not harsh. Love is not mean-spirited. Kindness does not rejoice in the demise of others. Kindness offers forgiveness. Kindness entreats with the goal of creating peace. Kindness makes provision for repentance and reconciliation. Kindness is not modified or contingent upon the reaction or responses of others.

However, love does entreat. Love confronts—in wisdom, kindness, and grace. Kindness is not weakness. Kindness is strength under reserve.

“Love Does Not Envy”

Love desires the blessing of others. Love celebrates the achievements of others. Love does not act competitively—seeking superiority over others. Love is not covetous—does not desire what belongs to or is possessed by another.

Love celebrates what another achieves. Love rejoices for those who enjoy blessing, wealth, and/or notoriety.

“Love Does Not Parade Itself”

Love does not make effort to draw attention to one’s self. Love does not seek the “limelight.” Love seeks for the

advancement of others. Love may indeed be paraded, but does not parade itself.

“Love is Not Puffed Up”

Love is humble—genuinely aware of one’s true person. Love is not arrogant—boastful and/or acting in inflated superiority toward others. Love seeks to serve. Love will lay aside self and/or become “less” in order to seek for the best.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5–8).

Next Week

We will continue the development of the list next week. For now, please keep in mind that these attributes are a description of love—not people. People fail. People are often impatient. People can be unkind. People covet. People will seek what is best for themselves. People can be rude and provoked. People can be skeptical and think the worst of others. People may rejoice in iniquity. People may lose hope and give up. But, love never fails.

Love is the nature of God. It is the nature of Jesus. Therefore, born again and Spirit-filled believers will grow in grace and begin to look more like Jesus.

As we grow, in and by the grace and mercy of God, I pray the Lord will allow us genuine and true humility. I pray that we will grow in surrender as empowered by the Lord. I pray that the Lord will continue to shape our will toward a gentle selflessness—for the glory and praise of God.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul