

Parson to Person
1 Corinthians 13
(The Greatest: Love) Part 3

“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).

For the sake of the print version of our (one-sided) list on the attributes of love, I am including the first five attributes we covered last week.

What Love Looks Like (Part 2—From Last Week)

“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).

What Love Looks Like (Part 3)

“Love Does Not Behave Rudely”

From a biblical worldview we note that love does not act in defiance of social and moral standards (with resulting disgrace, embarrassment, and shame), does not act shamefully, engage in indecent behavior or participate in any shameful deed.

“Behave rudely” must be understood in Biblical context and not from today’s corrupt “societal norms.” Thus we note that love must never behave or act in offensive behavior toward God. Love is of a high moral standard. Love does not purpose to shame or intentionally embarrass others. Love does not act in indecency or debauchery.

“Love Does Not Seek its Own”

Love does not seek for self-gratification, self-appeasement, or self-ambition. Simply stated, love is in direct

contradiction to lust. Precisely, “*seek its own*” is to “seek the self,” to be “me-centric,” to be “narcissistic.”

Love is others centered.

“Love is Not Provoked”

The King James Bible suggests “not *easily* provoked.” However, the word “*easily*” added by the translators does not help. The Greek simply reads “not provoked.” Moreover, we must note that Paul’s description herein is a counter reaction to the Corinthian’s self-centered and easily aggravated disposition.

However, Moses told Israel that God was provoked by their rebellions (see Deuteronomy 31–32), and Paul was provoked in his spirit when he noted that the city of Athens “*was given over to idols*” (see Acts 16:17). Therefore, the prohibition against being provoked must be understood by contrasting selfish motivation with Spirit-led, Godly grief or a call to active intervention.

“Love Thinks No Evil”

Love does not unjustly assign blame or evil to others. Love seeks to think the best of others rather than the worse. Love does not keep account of and record wrong or harm. Love is quick to forgive. This expression “thinks no evil” is where some get the expression “love keeps no record of wrongs.”

However, God acquits the believer (see Hebrews 8:12, 10:17) but will by no means forget or clear the record of the rebellious unbeliever (see Exodus 34:5–7).

“Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity”

Love does not celebrate evil. Love is not comfortable with wickedness. Love does not enjoy the demise of others or the punishment of evil doers (see Ezekiel 33:11).

“Love Rejoices in the Truth”

Love celebrates right and good.

“Love Bears All Things”

Love is patient and enduring. Love stands up under pressure. However, love is not tolerant of evil.

“Love Believes All Things”

Love is trusting. Love is not skeptical, pessimistic, or cynical. However, love does not blindly trust and is not naïve. Love does not deny the existence of error or wrong.

“Love Hopes All Things”

Love expects good and blessing. Love trusts the Lord for His overarching care and leadership.

“Love Endures All Things”

Love is enduring and constant. Love is neither fickle nor flimsy. Love does not run amidst adversity. Love is not a hireling.

“Love Never Fails”

Love does not deteriorate. Love does not move from its place. Love is stable.

Love is...People are Not!

Please keep in mind that these attributes are a description of love—not people. People fail. People are impatient. People can be unkind. People covet. People will seek what is best for themselves. People can be rude and selfishly irritated. People can be skeptical and think the worst of others. People may keep a record of the wrongs of others—while forgetting their own weakness and failure. People may celebrate evil and wickedness and turn away from the truth. People may lose hope and give up. But, love endures, is stable, does not cave in under pressure. Love never fails.

Love is the nature of God. It is the nature of Jesus. Therefore, as born again Spirit-filled believers, we look to the Lord for His agape as manifested in and by His power rather than self-reliance and human performance.

God is at work in every believer, shaping and molding us more and more in agape love. Some day in the future we will graduate and by God’s grace look and act like Jesus.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul