

A More Excellent Way

I Corinthians 13:1-7

11/ 26/ 05

Intro

Paul has been addressing the problems in the church and encouraging them to grow spiritually. In chapter 11, some were acting superior to others who didn't have as much as they did. Then, in chapter 12, Paul writes about spiritual gifts because some were acting superior to others and the church was not edified.

He finished the chapter by saying that he would show them a more excellent way. That more excellent way is the way of love. That was what they needed, and that is what we need. It is the more excellent way, because it is God's way.

These are important insights in love; the more excellent way.

I. Without Love, I Am Nothing

- The word love is probably one of the most broadly used words in our language.
- We say we love a whole gamut of things, and use the same word, but here the word is "agape."

A. Love is the quality most like God

- God is love.

I John 4:7-11 God is love, so let us love.

- It is the greatest evidence that God is within us; that we have been changed into His image.

- This is what we need most, to be filled up with all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:17-19, "...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

B. The love of God has been poured out

- God is love and He has been poured out within our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:5, "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

- In other words, this is the work of God. It is because God is changing us that we become like Him.
- When you read the list of the qualities of love, it is easy to see that we can't do it.

Illus – If we were to put our name in place of the word love, we could see how much we fall short.

Though if we were to put Jesus' name there, it fits perfectly.

C. Love makes us something

- Paul says that without love, I am nothing.
- I could even do amazing, incredible, superfluous things, but if I do not have love, I am nothing.
- How does this work? Because love is something that I give away and become greater because of it. The more I give away myself, the greater I become in spiritual things.

II Corinthians 12:15, “I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.”

II. Why We Should Love

A. So we don't become an irritable old cuss

- I thought about saying that in a softer way, but it just didn't have the punch. That's the truth, if we don't love; we turn into a bitter, angry person.
- Many people think the goal of life is to be loved, this is not quite right. We are already loved beyond our wildest imagination. The goal of life is to love.

Illus – Some people at first choose to be bitter, but after a while, they don't have to choose it any more, they have become it – they have become bitterness itself.

This is a choice that each of us has to make. I can't always choose my circumstances, but I can choose my reaction. I can choose who I want to be.

Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

II Corinthians 9:6, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

B. Because God said so

- God has made it abundantly clear that He the quality of love is the most important quality He desires in our lives.
- It is the greatest of all commandments and sums up the entire Old and New Testaments.

Matthew 22:36-40, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 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.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

- Jesus also said that He gives a new commandment:

John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

C. Love is good for us

- Paul wrote that in verse 3, that if I do all these things without love it profits me nothing, therefore to do these things with love, profits me something.
- If I love others is a great blessing to me.
- When we give love to others, we are loved in return.

Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

- Love is a more excellent way to live.

I Corinthians 12:31, “But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”

III. How to Love

A. Cherish the Lord Jesus Christ

- This is how we can change. When we are with the Lord, we become like Him.
- We are changed by what we love.

Illus – A.W. Tozer once wrote that we are becoming what we love. We are all in a process of becoming, of changing, and the objects of our affection determine the person we will become. Therefore, we must be very careful about choosing what, and who, we love.

Matthew 6:21, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 6:44-45, “For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

B. Protect the relationship

- If we cherish and value something, we protect it.
- We must be very careful to protect the relationships we value. Sometimes we do hurtful things to those we love most, but this is within our power to do something to change this.

Illus – I remember Jordi telling me about having lunch with Joyce Mehl. She told Jordi that she and Pastor Ron had never had a fight because both of them cared more about the relationship than being right.

Matthew 13:44-46, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

C. Love always edifies

- That’s the point of what Paul wanted them to understand. We are called to love and that means that we desire to edify or build up our brother or sister in Christ.

I Corinthians 8:1-3, “We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God.”

- It means watching every word that comes from our mouths to be certain that it does not tear down the one for whom Christ died.

Ephesians 4:29, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Conclusion

The most excellent way is love. It is that which makes us something, because without it, we are nothing. And the greatest way to grow in love is to grow in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.