

## The Greatest is Love

I Corinthians 13:1-7

11/ 26/ 05

### Intro

We continue studying one of the most important chapters in the bible because it gives us insights into the greatest of all spiritual things – love.

Paul knew this was what was lacking in the church in Corinth. It was what they needed in order to be the church that God desired for them to be. It is what we need

But here is where there is much misunderstanding. The definition of love is impossible to accomplish by human effort. Yet many people think they can simply try harder and learn to love.

One of the principles we learned last week was that we learn to love not by trying harder, but by growing in our relationship to the Lord. God is love and when we abide in Him, we take on His character. That is how we change spiritually.

### **These are principles of what love is.** **Love is the greatest of all spiritual things.**

#### **I. Love Does Not Act Unbecomingly**

- On other words, love is not rude.

##### A. Love is patient

- Because God is patient. We have seen that illustrated in biblical proportions.

**Illus – When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive...**

**Matthew 18:21-22, Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”**

- The Lord was also patient with Israel 490 years. He had commanded them to give the land its Sabbath rest every 7 years, but they did not listen. Finally, after 490 years, He gave the land 70 years of rest when they went into captivity.
- Love is patient. It waits.
- Notice that love does require perfection on the part of the one being loved. That is not what agape love is.
- Patience is about not being irritable over every little thing.

**Colossians 3:12-13, “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”**

#### B. Love is kind

- When you love someone, there is a delight in doing kind things. It is a joy to bless.

**Illus – A couple of years ago, we did something different for Christmas. We drew names and the person whose name we drew was to be secretly blessed for the whole Christmas season. It was truly a lot of fun.**

- Kindness of the Lord is again our example.

**Romans 2:4-5, “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”**

- God desires to see kindness in us as well; this means that we bless those around us.

**I Peter 3:8-10, “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”**

C. Love is not jealous

- There are many biblical examples of jealousy bringing many troubles into people’s lives.

**Illus – Cain was jealous of able and killed him, Joseph’s brothers were jealous and sold him into slavery, the Pharisees were jealous of Jesus and later the disciples.**

- The root of jealousy is pride. When someone else seems to succeed, it suggests that I have failed, or am a failure. In other words, I personalize their success; I make it about me, when it had nothing to do with me.

**James 3:16-18, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”**

## II. Love Believes All Things

- God believes in us. He is for us. This is such an importance aspect of love. We need to believe in each other, give each other the benefit of the doubt, to believe in the other person’s heart, that there are good intentions there; even though we know they aren’t perfect, we need to believe in the intentions of their heart.

A. Love bears all things

- To bear all things means to carry other’s burdens.
- And if we love the way the Lord loves, then we give a light burden to others.

**Illus – Are you difficult to live with? Let others feel that being with you is no burden at all.**

**Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

**Galatians 6:2-3, “Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”**

B. Love hopes all things

- This is part of believing in those we love.
- This goes along with not taking into account a wrong suffered. Literally, it means in the Greek, “No thinking evil.” In other words, we don’t

dwell on the wrong things a person has done, but we have hope in our heart. We believe in that person.

- Why? We do this because God believes in us.

**Illus – Zaccheus was a tax-collector and despised by the people. He was considered despicable, yet when Jesus came through and saw Zaccheus in the Sycamore tree, He invited him to have fellowship, to eat with Him.**

**Luke 19:1-10 Zaccheus is found.**

- Contrary to popular opinion, criticism is actually not a spiritual gift.

**Illus – When my boys came to America from Russia, I knew that one of the most important things I could give them was to believe in no matter what happened.**

**This is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other.**

C. Love endures all things

- The idea of enduring is found in being able to endure hardship.
- Difficult times will come to every relationship, even in our relationship with the Lord.
- He must endure because of the hardship that we bring to the relationship.
- Love endures; it is able to persevere under trial.

**Genesis 29:20, “So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.”**

**III. Love Never Fails**

A. The partial will done away

- Paul here is teaching the excellence of love by showing us that other spiritual gifts will be done away.
- Gifts of prophecy will no longer be necessary when the perfect comes. Paul is referring to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In heaven there will be no need for prophecy.
- The gift of tongues will no longer be necessary either.
- But loves not only remains, but increases. We have the Holy Spirit now only like a down payment.

**Ephesians 1:13-14, “--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

B. We will see the Lord face to face

- This is what Paul means that love never fails. We will see the Lord face to face and our love for Him will only increase.

- We see in a mirror dimly refers to the fact that their mirrors were polished metal and so they could only see in a mirror dimly, but we will see Him face to face.

**Exodus 33:20, But He said, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!”**

- The glorious truth is that we who are unworthy will be able to see the Lord face to face; that He has taken away our shame and will allow us this intimacy with Him.

**I John 2:28, “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”**

C. The greatest of these is love

- There are abide faith, hope and love, but the greatest is love because love is what gives significance to the others.
- Love is greater than any spiritual gift because it will remain and only increase in the presence of the Lord.

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

Conclusion

**May we truly be convinced of the love that God has for us and may we understand that love is the most excellent way to live. May we believe in each other even as God believes in us.**