

Love Conquers All - November 22, 2020

I Corinthians 13:4—13

INTRODUCTION — The bride was resplendent in her tasteful, white gown and long, white train. The groom stood next to her, in his expensive tuxedo, and he took her hand in his, and they faced the minister. They looked to the more than one hundred guests in the church to be the perfect couple! Then the minister began to speak: “*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*” The minister read on through I Corinthians 13— “*Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous . . . love never fails . . .*”

This is a scene played out at many weddings, for many couples have First Corinthians Chapter 13 read at their weddings. It is often called the “love chapter” of the Bible. And so it is. It can be a good description of the kind of giving, forgiving, understanding, love that married couples need to share for their marriage to be successful, happy, and fulfilling!!

However, it was not originally written to be a description of love between a husband and wife. When the apostle Paul wrote this chapter, he was writing about spiritual gifts, and the proper use and the potential or “misuse” of the gifts of the spirit! It was in this context— in the middle of this discussion and teaching about “spiritual gifts” — that Paul began talking and teaching about love. What he meant by talking about love in the middle of teaching about spiritual gifts is that love is more important than anything else— including the “*gifts of the spirit! !*” The New Testament and the original language in which it was written— Greek — tell us a lot about love. The Bible tells us about:

I. The FOUR KINDS — of LOVE!!

A. Four kinds of love — At the time the New Testament was written, there were four Greek words for our one English word for love. The first is:

1. Storge — means “affection” — as in a parent’s love and affection

for his or her child. This word does not appear in the New Testament.

2. Eros — means “romantic love” or “being in love” or “physical love,” including passion. It is where we get the word “erotic.” This word does not appear in the New Testament. I’ve looked all the way through my Greek New Testament and a Greek dictionary — nothing about “Eros.”

The two words that are in the New Testament are:

3. Phileo — means “friendship” or “brotherly love.” You know the meaning of the city of Phila-delphia, in Greek?? Delphia=city, and Phila = “brotherly love.” So Phila- delphia is “the city of brotherly love.” This word “Phileo” is used several dozen times in the Greek New Testament for references to love. It is the word that Peter uses for his love for the risen Jesus in John 21.

The 4th Greek word for love, and the second one used in the New Testament is:

4. Agape — Agape is translated into English sometimes in the King James version of the bible (and all through this Chapter 13 of I Corinthians in the KJV) as the word: charity! ! ! Agape and charity mean “unconditional love! ! Agape is the word used the *most* in the New Testament for our *English* word love. Agape really means: “love with no strings attached!!”

B. Jesus’ command to His disciples: (John 13:34) on the night before He was betrayed, Jesus taught his disciples “*to love (agape) one another as much as I have loved (agaped) you.*”

C. God’s love — is— “unconditional”!! God has no conditions in his love for us— “love with no strings attached!!” This is the nature of God’s love— it is his love and care for humanity, regardless of what humans do!! This is the kind of love that is expressed in John 3:16 — “*for God so loved (agape) the world that He gave His only Son...*” That is the kind of love God has— for us

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Now— what about:

II. GOD'S LOVE, and OUR LOVE

Well— this agape love is what God's love is like. The love described in I Corinthians 13. It is God's perfect, agape love that is written about! ! What about our love??? The Bible tells us several things about our love:

A. We are commanded to love God. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

B. We are commanded to love our neighbors. In Matthew 22:39 Jesus said: *“And the second [commandment] is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

C. We are commanded to love our enemies!! In Matthew 5:43-47, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: *“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you(!!!)”*

D. We are taught to love ourselves ! ! — as God loves and accepts us ! !

1. Matthew 22:39 — The implication is that God wants us to love and care for others and ourselves as much as He does!

2. In fact, psychologists, psychiatrists and counselors, and ministers and preachers know that people will not love anyone else any more than they love themselves! ! ! If a person hates himself, then he will hate others, also! ! ! So Jesus' desire is: that we might love ourselves and others with the kind of love that God has for us! ! ! !

E. How can we do this? ! ? ? ! ? !

1. Most people love only those who are easy to love.

2. A mother's love is closest to God's — but still falls short

III. THE ANSWER: LET GOD'S LOVE DWELL IN US, and LOVE OTHERS THROUGH US ! ! !

A. We can love with God's love. This is the kind of love described in I Corinthians 13.

1. v. 4: *“Love is patient . . . love is kind”*

2. v. 8: *“Love never fails”*

3. And the reason that the apostle Paul stopped in his teaching about spiritual gifts to talk about love — look at the passing nature of spiritual gifts: “*prophecies will cease;*” “*tongues will be stilled;*” “*knowledge will pass away.*”

4. Why? Because we only know now in part. We still live in a sinful, self-centered world! ! But one day we shall live in a perfect world. We shall know the love of God in a perfect way. And when we know love perfectly, then we shall have no need of spiritual gifts! We will have no need of anything, because God’s love will be all around us, supporting us and giving us all that we could possibly need or want! Love will last forever! ! !

5. And this perfect love of God is available to our hearts today! Now ! There’s no waiting ! ! !

B. Because— we love by faith. Faith is crucial in Christian life

1. Everything about the Christian life is based on faith — We are saved by grace through faith! ! ! (Eph. 2: 8– 9)

4. God has an unending supply of agape love from which we can draw— by faith! God will answer our prayers to be loving ! !

5. Loving by faith can resolve conflicts of race, marriage, family, money, etc. whatever the problem or conflict facing people.

7. One thing loving by faith should motivate us to is to engage in friendly, personal evangelism! ! ! Can you really love your neighbor, and not be concerned for his or her immortal, eternal soul? ! ?

CONCLUSION— Steve Clarke was a young man in Australia who had been involved in playing the saxophone in jazz and rock bands. Unfortunately, he was into all kinds of drugs during most of that time. He was living a typical hippie lifestyle in the 1970's, selling drugs and living in a commune for a while. A year later, he met a unique married couple and their young friend. The three were headed to the younger man’s wedding. But what startled Steve was the easy way that all three had in talking about Jesus! The younger man, Larry, told Steve that

he'd been a surfer in California and had enjoyed a life of drugs, women, money and fame. But after a while he began to feel empty. Some friends introduced him to Christ . . . and he found the peace, joy and the purpose he had always wanted. Steve was intrigued by what Larry had said. So he went to Larry's wedding as invited. He'd never met anyone like those three! At the wedding, he found a lot more people like that! ! People who were warm, generous, giving — because they were Christians. After the wedding, one of them talked to Steve about Jesus Christ, and explained in detail about God's plan of salvation, like the Bible verse from II Corinthians 5:17— *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* Steve said he wanted to know Christ!! So Henry told Steve how to repent of his sin, and turn to Christ and receive Jesus Christ into his heart and life. Soon Steve led his roommate to Christ. Since then, Steve helped plant new churches, attended Bible College, been an evangelist, taught in a college of theology, and earned a doctoral degree at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky.

All because one older couple, and a former California surfer, stopped on the way to a wedding to talk with Steve, and share something about Christ!!! That's unconditional love! ! That comes from a deep concern for the eternal destiny of your neighbor! !

Do you care for the eternal life of your neighbor, or a co— worker, or a relative?? Are you concerned for his or her immortal soul? ? Will you love them for Jesus' sake??