

#01 THE VALUE OF LOVE

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

I want to encourage you to read it again and again. In fact, if you are willing to see your relationships changed from wrong to right, open your Bible every day to 1 Cor. 13 and read it on your knees before God. Open your heart to the illumination of the Holy Spirit and, by faith, commit to living 1 Cor. 13 by the grace of God. As the Holy Spirit sheds this wonderful love abroad in your heart, your relationships will be transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Substitute Jesus for love in this chapter and see what I mean.

Today we begin with the first three verses and think about the value of love in the Christian life.

G. Campbell Morgan says of 1 Cor. 13, "In this chapter we enter the purest atmosphere and breathe the most fragrant odors."

This is the love Jesus called His ***new commandment***

(John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.)

It is the love Paul calls ***the fulfillment of the law***

(Rom. 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.)

It is the love John used to describe God when he said, **God is love (1 John 4:8, 16)**.

It is the love the Ephesian church was rebuked for losing in **Rev. 2:4 when the Lord said, I have this against you, that you have left your first love.** It is the only thing in the world which Paul dares to say is greater than faith and hope.

(1 Cor. 13:13). It is the greatest of all the jewels in the Christian crown.

In the first three verses of this great chapter, I want us to see the **value of love** as it provides integrity and credibility to the various expressions of our faith.

I. LOVE SHOWS IN OUR WORDS.

(v. 1) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

In the previous chapter Paul mentioned the gift of tongues. In the next chapter he deals with the subject of tongues in greater detail. In this chapter he begins with the gift of tongues and says that without love, it is totally meaningless. Even ***the tongues...of angels*** are meaningless apart from God. Tongues, regardless of the kind they are, are always about speech and communication.

A. NOTICE THE DIVERSITY OF SPEECH

Speech is one of the major activities of human life and James warns us that it is one of the most difficult to control - **(JAMES 3:5) Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!** Human speech has tremendous power for both good and evil. The spoken word has sent nations to war, destroyed careers and ruined relationships. On the other hand, the spoken word has turned despair into hope, frowns into smiles and doubt into assurance. Think about it - God made no other creature on earth with the ability to do so much just by making sounds!

A. NOTICE THE DIVERSITY OF SPEECH

B. NOTICE THE DIRECTION OF SPEECH

What is it that makes human speech a holy, sacred and pleasing thing in the sight of God? What does Paul say?

Is it eloquence that pleases God, is it angelic speech?

No. It is what he describes in **Eph. 4:15 as speaking the truth in love.** It is love that sanctifies our speech and makes it right in the eyes of God.

It's no wonder that we hurt one another so badly with verbal daggers that pierce the heart. **It's no wonder** - when we have not yet learned how to love and to speak the language of love. It is love that sanctifies our speech.

I. LOVE SHOWS IN OUR WORDS.

II. LOVE SHINES IN OUR WISDOM.

(v. 2) 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, and have not charity, I am nothing. In 1 Cor. 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Knowledge is one of the spiritual gifts and, here, Paul relates it to the gift of prophecy.

I believe that all the prophets in the early church had the gift of knowledge, though not everyone with the gift of knowledge was necessarily a prophet.

A. NOTICE THE DANGER OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE

Knowledge can be a dangerous thing. Just ask Adam and Eve! But knowledge is especially dangerous in the absence of love. The Pharisees knew the law but they didn't love people. That made them dangerous because, instead of being missionaries, they became a police force.

On the other hand, Jesus knew everything there was to know about everything and every person. But Jesus was never a policeman, He was always a missionary. Why? Because Jesus loved people.

A. NOTICE THE DANGER OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE

B. NOTICE THE DAMAGE OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE

When the Pharisees, who knew well what the law said about adultery, caught a woman in the very act of adultery, they wanted to stone her to death. Jesus, on the other hand, also knew what the woman had done. But Jesus chose to forgive her and deliver her from sin.

If the Pharisees had met the woman at the well in John 4 they would have condemned her to death, too. But even though Jesus knew all about her, His only desire was to save her from her sins. The difference? The Pharisees didn't love people. Jesus did.

The greatest teacher is not the one with the greatest knowledge, it is the one with the greatest love.

- A. NOTICE THE DANGER OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE**
- B. NOTICE THE DAMAGE OF KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LOVE**
- C. NOTICE THE DELIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE WITH LOVE**

- I. LOVE SHOWS IN OUR WORDS.**
- II. LOVE SHINES IN OUR WISDOM.**
- III. LOVE STRENGTHENS OUR WORK.**

Paul goes on: **VRS.2 and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.** In the context of Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts, this is likely a reference to miracle working faith. But as wonderful as it is to have extraordinary faith in the unlimited power of God, **Paul insists that faith minus love equals zero.**

James tells us that faith without works is dead.
Paul tells us that faith without love is dead.

A. NOTICE THE HOW SELFISH FAITH WOULD BE WITHOUT LOVE

What good is great faith without love?
Without love faith is self-centered and selfish
and sometimes even cruel.

B. NOTICE HOW SELFLESS FAITH WOULD BE WITH LOVE

In **Mark 2** we have the wonderful story of four men who bring a paralytic friend to Jesus. There are two things at work in this story, one of which is obviously great faith. These men so believed in the power of the Lord that they cut a hold in the roof and let their friend down through it in order to get him into the presence of Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus saw their faith and implies that it made quite an impression on Him. But there is something else at work in this story, and that is the love that brings a friend to Jesus in the first place. These men brought their friend to Jesus, not simply because they had great faith, but because they had great love.

Do we believe in the power of Jesus to save and transform lives? Of course we do! We've seen it and celebrated it and shouted "Praise the Lord." Why then do we bring so few people to Jesus? It's not our lack of faith, is it?

It is because faith minus love equals zero. Faith without love is dead. It takes love to multiply our faith so that others also might be brought to Jesus and be saved.

Paul says in **verse 3, And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**

- A. Love is greater than signs (1)**
- B. Love is greater than speech (2)**
- C. Love is greater than sacrifice (3)**

Love purifies our sacrifice, qualifies our giving, multiplies our faith, beautifies our knowledge and sanctifies our speech.

Paul calls it a more excellent way. Is it your way?

Add up every plus in your life, everything you have going for you, and without love they all equal zero!

Let's take the more excellent way and let's begin right here and right now.

GIVE BECAUSE YOU LOVE.....