

LOVE DIVINE

Bible Background – 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27 – 14:1

Printed Text – 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Love Is the Greatest

¹³ If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.

³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud

⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸ Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

⁹ Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture!

¹⁰ But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.

¹² Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

¹³ Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

True love comes from God; it is His very nature. In fact, it is the essence of who God is. As believers, we receive God's divine love, His nature, which should transform us into something brand new. The way we see ourselves and others; our behavior and actions in all situations; these all begin to reflect the new Life that has begun in Him. The outer change is certainly not instantaneous, but a process. Through the scripture passage in today's study, Paul shares his understanding of divine love as the very epitome of the Spirit-led life.

Background: Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while he was living and ministering in the city of Ephesus. The letter was written between AD 53 and 55. During his time in Ephesus, he had also received a letter from the church at Corinth (7:1) expressing confusion about marriage, divorce, corporate worship, bodily resurrection, and living in a pagan society. Paul wrote to encourage the Corinthians and to emphasize the importance of holiness. He also wrote to correct their misunderstanding and abuse of spiritual gifts, which he discussed in chapter 12. Chapter 13 is often misinterpreted, which leads to its improper application as merely an ode to the virtues of love. Paul was using 1 Corinthians 13 to address specific issues in the Corinthian church: selfishness, division, abuse of gifts, and envy. The Greek term for love (KJV: charity) used in this chapter is *agape* (ah-GAH-pay). This word is closely associated with the Hebrew word *chesed* (KHESS-ed), which refers to God's covenant love for His people. Because of this association, *agape* became a keyword for describing God's character and took on the meaning of a divine love that is deeply loyal. Believers should emulate this love.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 94

Love is Superior

1 Corinthians 13:1-3: Love is the motivator for sharing the spiritual gifts that God has made available to us. Love is essential, for without love, the spiritual gifts have little value. Our purpose in exercising Spiritual gifts is to please God. But with love out of the equation, we do what we do for self-centered gratification. We would glorify self, not God, for our natural tendencies are to make ourselves the center of our universe. This should never be. We should allow God's divine love to reorder the priorities in our universe so that He is at the center of all we do.

The gift of the most eloquent of speech and the gift of tongues is just noise without love. The gift of preaching that can "bring down the house", or the greatest of intellectual prowess means nothing if not motivated by God's love. Even the gift of great faith can lead to false pride if not motivated by the love of God. Tremendous acts of charity, even to the point of self-sacrifice can be no more than self-promotion or obligation without God's love. All of these gifts and deeds, meant to edify the body of Christ, have no meaning unless they are done in love.

◆ *If works without love are useless, should we stop making an effort to give of ourselves?*

Characteristics of Love

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: Love is not merely an emotion, but as Paul describes in these verses, love is something that one does. As believers, we receive divine love from God and as a result, we are to love others. Love is practical and should be put to practice every day in our interactions with others. As, Christians we must be aware of our actions and be intentional about showing and sharing that love with others. Verse 7 sums it up: Love "puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end." (MSG)

◆ *Describe how you have seen these aspects of love shown in Christians you admire.*

Love Endures

1 Corinthians 13:8-13: Love, like God, is complete. We are imperfect creatures and only view the spiritual and material things, incompletely. The “perfect” (Gk. *teleios*, maturity or completeness) will come at the conclusion of this present age. The gifts, that some think so highly of, are temporary. They are given, by God, in this current age as tools for the building of the church. Paul says that a time will come when the gifts will not be necessary, we will see things perfectly. In the perfection of heaven, there will be no need for Spiritual gifts but love will last eternally. For these reasons, love is superior to gifts. Therefore, it is childish and immature to make idols of the Spiritual gifts while neglecting to cherish the love of God which endures forever.

But love is also superior to faith and hope. When we finally see God, faith is no longer needed and hope is fulfilled. Love will outlast these as well. We will continue to love and be loved by God forever. Love is eternal and never ends. Love therefore, is the greatest gift of all.

◆ *How are we to “put away childish things” but still retain child-like faith?*

Conclusion

God has granted each believer at least one gift to be used to help others (1 Corinthians 12:7). It is important to use our gifts, but imperative that we understand the purpose of our gift. Our God-given gifts are to be shared with others out of God-given love. Let divine love be the motivator in all that we do to express our love for those in need. Love is the most enduring and eternal of all the gifts that has given.

Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Fall Quarter), 90-100. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.
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Lesson for Next Week – November 1, 2020 – Study Guide 9

LOVING BY SERVING

Bible Background ♦ JOHN 13:1-35
Printed Text ♦ JOHN 13:1-15, 34-35
Devotional Reading ♦ JOHN 15:18 – 16:4

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Laban Arranges to Wash Servant's Feet
(Genesis 24:24-33)

TUESDAY

Brothers Provided Water to Wash Feet
(Genesis 43:20-25)

WEDNESDAY

Servants and Masters, but Same Lord
(Ephesians 4:6-9)

THURSDAY

Peter Denies Jesus Three Times
(John 13:36-38; 18:15-18, 25-27)

FRIDAY

Jesus Betrayed by a Trusted Disciple
(Psalm 41:8-10; John 13:21-30)

SATURDAY

Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet with Perfume
(John 12:1-7)

SUNDAY

Jesus Loved Disciples; Washed Their Feet
(John 13:1-15, 34-35)