

1 Cor.13:13b¹³ ...but the greatest of these is love. www.bible-sermons.org March 4, 2018

1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (ESV) ¹ *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* ² *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.* ³ *If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.* ⁴ *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant* ⁵ *or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;* ⁶ *it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.* ⁷ *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* ⁸ *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.*

I will skip to verse 13 for the purpose of emphasizing the topic of LOVE.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV) ¹³ *So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

The scripture gives the following reasons why the greatest of these is love. This love that we are talking about is from above, it's heavenly love. This love that is described here builds the church, the bride of Christ. With each act of divine love another stitch goes into the wedding gown of the Bride of Christ. This divine love is God's love. He did it all, he prepared us for good works (Eph. 2:10-11). Now we can walk in them and love with God's love.

1 Cor. 13 is known as the love chapter, however, it was not written to be shared at the wedding ceremony. The Apostle Paul wrote chapter 13 to a group of believers in Corinth that were living like unbelievers. They were quarreling, they were jealous and boasting. They were divided. One said, "I follow Paul", another said, "I follow Apollo's" and still another said "I follow Cephas". Paul calls them spiritually immature, infants in Christ, they were suing one another. There was even sexual immorality occurring in the congregation. This group of believers was in need of discipline. The reason Paul wrote to the Corinthians was to correct wrong doings amongst them. Paul did it in love. Look how he addresses them in the beginning of his letter. **1 Corinthians 1:2-9 (ESV)** ² *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:* ³ *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord*

Jesus Christ. ⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

What Paul did with his letter is to go beyond what he knew about the believers in Corinth. He accessed the love of Christ to see them as Christ sees them. ***Ephesians 3:19 (ESV)*** ¹⁹ *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Paul's writing here is so kind, so patient. He is bearing all things, hoping all things. This is an example of what he asks of them in chapter 13. Then Paul writes in the next 12 Chapters explaining to them who they are in Christ. Before Paul gets to Chapter 13, he outlines the following:

- A. Dealing with division. He writes, Christ and His Cross, the unique solution to all problems in the church. He explains that, Christ is not divided. He emphasizes, Christ crucified, God's power and God's wisdom. Christ, our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He clarifies that Christ crucified is the center of the apostles' ministry. He exhorts them that the church is God's cultivated land and God's building and that they are the Stewards of the mysteries of God, which is, Christ in you, the hope of Glory. Paul also writes about practical issues: evil brothers, lawsuits among believers, abuse of freedom, marriage life, head covering, the Lord's Supper, gifts and one body with many members.

Now that Paul lays this foundation he gets into Love. At the end of Chapter 13, the Apostle Paul says: Faith, Hope and love Remain, but the greatest of these is love. The scripture gives the following reasons why "the greatest of these is Love".

God is Love: 1 Cor. 13:4-8 gives the most complete list of God's virtues expressed as love. The 15 virtues are (Love defined): ⁴ *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.*

The scripture also gives the following reasons why “the greatest of these is Love”. God’s Love is From Above: The resurrected Christ, right now, is at the right hand of God pouring out His Holy Spirit to anyone who will receive it. When humanity opens up their hearts to Christ the love from above is poured into our hearts to become an indwelling power. Now we can love. Jesus says in: **John 17:22-23 (ESV)** ²² *The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,* ²³ *I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.*

I in them and you in me. The world will see God’s Love whenever we live out God’s virtues. This is who God is, GOD IS LOVE. Look at how patient and kind God is with you. God does not envy, God does not boast, God is not proud, God does not dishonor others, God is not self seeking, God is not easily angered, God keeps no record of wrong, God does not delight in evil, God rejoices with the truth, God always protects us, God always trusts, God always hopes and God always perseveres. This love from above, God’s love, goes beyond loving the loveable and loves the unloveable. God’s love even loves His enemies. Can you image that? We should be able to image that. The scripture tells us that we were enemies of God. **Romans 5:10-11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.* ¹¹ *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.* Live with gratitude. When God asks us to love our enemies it should be very natural to us because that’s exactly how God’s love came to us. Because while we were enemies, God sent His Son. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 5:43-45 (ESV)** ⁴³ *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’* ⁴⁴ *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ⁴⁵.

That’s exactly what Jesus did on the cross, he asked, “Father, forgive them for they don’t know what they’re doing”.

God doesn’t expect us to love out of our own strength! He knows we cannot. You and I need to learn, over and over, day after day, week after week, that we are bankrupt. We must let go, give up and trust God. And we can! His word tells us in John 15:1-12, I am the vine you are the branches. This divine love from above is described as a vine. And who are we, we are the branches. The branches produce

fruit by drawing sap from the vine. This divine sap produces the fruit of the Spirit. God is the fruit of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit are the same as the 15 virtues of divine love. That's the key for us to love like Christ: simply draw from the vine. That's the key for the world to see God's Love and to live out God's virtues is to abide, remain, continue or stay drawing from the vine. He is the vine, we are the branches. The apostle Paul encourages us to set our mind on the things above. The things above are God's love in Christ Jesus cleansing us of all our wrongs, restoring us to right relationship with God so we can draw from the vine. God's Love in Christ Jesus came down from above and made it possible for believers to love like God.

The scripture goes on to tell us why "the greatest of these is Love".

God's Love Fulfills the Law: **Romans 13:8-10 (ESV)** ⁸ *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰ *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* These verses are basically saying there is only one commandment. Jesus also says it this way: **Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)** ³⁷ *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.* ³⁸ *This is the great and first commandment.* ³⁹ *And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* Can you believe it? Jesus is saying that when we are patient and kind, when we do not envy, boast or act proud we are fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way: **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)** ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

When God formed Adam from the dust and created Eve out of Adam's side, God gave them one commandment. After they failed, God gave Moses Ten Commandments which then grew to over 600. Now that Jesus, the life-giving spirit, is on the throne pouring out his Spirit we are back to one or two commandments, which are: love the Lord with all your heart soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. I get the impression that this is very important and

that believers should spend more time focused on the 15 virtues of Love given to us through the Holy Spirit, our indwelling power.

Another reason the scripture gives why “the greatest of these is Love” is- God’s Love Builds the Church: The Church is God’s people. The love of God is always at work through our relationships with one another. Jesus says –

John 13:34-35 (ESV) ³⁴ *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

How does the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit love through us? vs. 34: just as I have loved you. God is patient with us, He’s kind to us, and He doesn’t keep a record of our wrongs. When we get to heaven not one of our sins is going to be remembered.

Again, we see that by being patient and kind to one another, by keeping no record of wrong, by rejoicing with the truth with one another, the world will see God’s virtues. This is who God is, GOD IS LOVE. Paul tells the believers in Ephesus: ***Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)*** ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

God is creating situations where he will work on us, the church body, each member is being worked on. He wants to chip off the rough edges in us through our relationships with each other. He wants to sand down some high spots. We, the body of Christ, are his workmanship. The primary area we are being worked on is in our immediate family and our church family. Paul commands the Colossian believers:

Colossians 3:12-15 (ESV) ¹² *Put on then (like a cloak or coat or covering), as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,* ¹³ *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* ¹⁴ *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* ¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*

Love is knitting believers together: ***Colossians 2:2 (ESV)*** ² *that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ,* ³ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Look at what we are touching when we are patient with one another, bearing with one another and forgiving each other, we are touching God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If you want to see God knitting us together in love, do like Paul commands the church in Rome: **Romans 13:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* Can you imagine that we have an indwelling power that gives away love? The Love of God has been poured into our heart and now we can give it away, we can hand it out freely. This is what I owe you and it is flowing in my spirit. It's flowing with all the forgiveness, all the kindness and all the patience I've received and now I want to give it out.

Humanity is seeing the virtues of God when we love each other. **Romans 12:9-10 (ESV)** ⁹ *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* ¹⁰ *Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

The Apostle Paul is encouraging us to have a competition! Outdo one another in showing honor. Walk around all day long showing honor to everyone we meet. Especially to the ones that are closest to us. A great example of this is when Jesus washes the disciple's feet. Jesus loved them so much he honored them by washing their feet. And listen to this, who was in that room with him? Judas was in that room, the one that betrayed him and Jesus washed his feet just like he did to all the others. The other eleven had no idea that Judas was the one because Jesus showed him the same love as all the others. And now, if you're born again, that same divine love is indwelling you to show this sin sick world God's virtues.

2 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV) ¹¹ *Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

The scripture gives the following reasons why, "the greatest of these is Love". God's Love Did It All, Now Live With Gratitude and let His love flow out of you to others!: **Galatians 3:13 (ESV)** ¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—And Christ did this while we were enemies.*

Galatians 4:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,* ⁵ *to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.* ⁶ *And because you are sons, God*

has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Redeemed from the curse, redeemed from the law.

Redeemed: The basic meaning of the Hebrew root is to achieve the transfer of ownership from one to another through payment of a price or an equivalent substitute. ~Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.

Christ transfers ownership from the prince of the power of the air to the Prince of Peace of anyone who believes in Him. You're either under the influence of the Prince of Peace, Christ Jesus the Lord or under the influence of Satan, the prince of the power of the air and his rulers and authorities. I don't see any middle ground.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) ²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:20- These are the effects of being crucified with Christ and the well-springs of Love:

1. New Creation (2 Cor. 5:17)
2. Born Again: Old things are passed away – Reconciliation of mankind
3. We who were once far away have been brought near (Eph.2:13)
4. Now Children of God (Gal. 3:26)
5. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3)
6. Believers can never be separated from God (Rm. 8:39)
7. No Condemnation: We are forgiven (Rm. 8:1)
8. We can approach God w/freedom, confidence and with boldness
9. God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phi. 4:19)

Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV) ¹ *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*

² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* It could be said that when we are being patient and kind to each other that we too can be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Let me close with the fact that the resurrected Christ, right now, is at the right hand of God pouring out His Holy Spirit into our heart. This Holy Spirit is full of the virtues of God's love and when we express them we show the world God's virtues. This is who God is, GOD IS LOVE. Look at how patient and kind God is with you.

God doesn't expect us to love out of our own strength! He knows we cannot. You and I need to learn, over and over, day after day, week after week, that we are bankrupt. We must let go, give up and trust God. And we can!

Jesus tells us, "I am the vine you are the branches". This divine love from above is described as a vine. And who are we? We are the branches. The branch produces fruit by drawing sap from the vine. This divine sap produces the fruit of the Spirit. God is the fruit of the Spirit. His Love is patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, keeps no record of wrong, love does not delight in evil, but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. This is the key for us to love like Christ: simply draw from the vine. This is the key for the world to see God's Love: as we live out God's virtues by abiding, remaining, continuing, staying and drawing from the vine of God's love.