

ASPECTS OF LOVE

Scripture: 1 Cor 13 vs 4 to 7.

Philip Powell

Part 1.

Introduction

During the next few weeks the topic for the weekly Bible study will be called 'Aspects of Love' from 1 Cor 13 vs 4 to 7.

K.J.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

N.I.V.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

There is a musical, which is called 'Aspects of Love', and there is also a lady who for many years has produced small drawings that have been printed in a daily newspaper entitled, 'Love is'. She highlights different aspects of love.

William Barclay calls this chapter 'The Hymn of Love' I have heard it called 'The Poem of Paul' It has also been titled, 'Loves Prerogatives'. I expect there are many other titles commentators have given to this chapter. I have to say that Whatever title it has it does not in any way alter the aspects of love Paul emphasises in the chapter.

Here is the definition of 'Love' as stated by the Holman Bible dictionary.

LOVE

"Is unselfish, loyal, and a benevolent concern for the well being of another. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul described "love" as a "more excellent way" than tongues or even preaching. The New Testament maintains this estimation of love throughout. The King James Version uses the word charity instead of "love" to translate the Greek word Paul used (agape). The word charity comes from the Latin caritas which means "dearness," "affection," or "high regard."

Today, the word charity is normally used for acts of benevolence, and so the word love is to be preferred as a translation of agape. Nevertheless, the reader who comes to the agape of the New Testament with the idea of benevolence in mind is better off than the reader who comes with the idea of physical pleasure and satisfaction.”

By looking closely at 1 Cor 13 vs 4 to 7 you will notice that there are 15 aspects to love mentioned by the apostle Paul. Paul, while inspired to write these things about love, searches out all aspects of it and pens what the Holy Spirit highlighted in his mind. It is a most comprehensive list and shows to the reader the real value of what agape love is all about.

I will list here now what some famous Christian people have written about love.

Give me such love for God and men as will blot out all hatred and bitterness.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER (1906–1945)

I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (1929–1968)

If you have love in your heart, you always have something to give.

It is astonishing how little one feels poverty when one loves.

JOHN BULVER (C. 1654)

It is clear from the teaching of Jesus and others, such as Paul and John that love is to play a very important role in Christian life. Jesus emphasised this in his discourses and when speaking to His disciples he says.

John 13 v 34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 15 vs 12 & 17 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. This is my command: Love each other.

John is also gripped by the theme of love and when he writes his letters, love is referred to on a number of occasions,

N.I.V.

1John 3 v 11 This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

3 v 23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another

4 vs 7 to 12 “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us other as he commanded us.

2John 1 v 6 “I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love”.

Peter also refers to love:

1Peter 1 vs 22 & 23 “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God”

It is clear from what Jesus and other N.T writers taught, that love is to be given priority in the lives of those who profess to love God.

The word ‘Love’ appears 281 times in the scriptures, which gives to us an indication of its importance.

In gleaning through what some have written concerning 1 Cor 13.

Explorer's Bible Study: New Testament Epistles and Revelation, Workbook, has divided the chapter up into three sections. This is what it says:

1. Love—Pre-eminent (1 Corinthians 13 vs 1 to 3)

Love must be the controlling influence in our lives as Christians no matter what gift of the Spirit may be given us. We cannot exercise that gift apart from love and pleasing God. It cannot be defined but we can describe and display it. Love is the ultimate test of what we claim as believers in Christ. The love of Christ should flow through us by the power of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced through His gifts of grace.

There is a warning that gifts can be possessed without the manifestation of love. The description of the characteristics of this love should be a mirror or plumb-line for self-examination for those who profess to be Christians.

2. Love's Prerogatives (1 Corinthians 13 vs 4 to 7)

Longsuffering and kindness are mentioned first. God's love to us is an example of this. Because of His great love for us we should also forebear one another in love. Love knows no envy. Envy is of Satan. Self-seeking and pride originated with Satan. Love vaunteth not itself and never seeks the applause of men. True love is not puffed up and does not behave itself unseemly. Meekness, modesty and unobtrusiveness are the ornaments of love. True love is expressed in devotion to others and is not easily provoked; it does not imagine evil against others. It hides rather than exposes the faults of others. Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rather is concerned for the things that are true. The last characteristics show the positive position of love, in that it puts up with anything but that which is wrong and sinful. It does not discredit the motives of others; therefore it hopes all things and endures all things.

3. Love—Its Permanence (1 Corinthians 13 vs 8 to 13)

Prophecies will come to an end. Tongues and knowledge will cease and vanish but love will never fail, cease or vanish. It is eternal and the greatest of all gifts. When Paul talks about desiring the best gift, our greatest desire should be for this more excellent way: love. With love, the evidence of the gift and characteristic given to us of the Holy Spirit, regardless of what ministry is given to us, will not be limited to an outward manifestation, or demonstration, but will be evidenced by the more excellent way in our work for Jesus Christ. We talk so much today about the Gifts of the Spirit, and it is well to remember that the fruit of the Spirit, which is expressed in this chapter and Galatians 5 vs 22 & 23 are vital. Jesus said "You will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7 vs 16, 20).

The 'Aspects of love', which are specifically named in 1Cor 13 vs 4 to 7 are worthy of some in-depth consideration. It is my hope, that following this series of studies we are about to embark upon, it will result in each of us having a greater love for each other. That anyone, who comes into contact with the members of the church, will be persuaded by the love they see in the heart of the people towards each other, and they will want to experience the same.

These 'Aspects of love' (or charity as expressed in the K.J.) must become an integral part of a Christian's life, otherwise there is no basis upon which to build. The foundation at the very heart of the fellowship we are to enjoy is this love or charity.

During this study we shall be considering each aspect, and then examine our selves in the light of God's word. If there is an area in our lives highlighted by the Holy Spirit that is in need of being strengthened in love. I trust we shall be transparent enough to confess our need before the Lord, and ask him to kindle a fire of sacred love on the altars of our lives.

Our aim and goal must be to become more and more like the Lord. To be able to be charitable and loving to all people in the same way the Lord has been in His dealing with us.

And now abides faith, hope, charity, (or love) these three; but the greatest of these is charity.
(1Cor 13 v 13)