**"Love is Indispensable"**1 Corinthians 13:1-13

**Good Morning Beloved,**

* A mom was on a Disney Cruise with her family…
  + Slight problem… the omelet line.
    - There was a server running the desired order to the table where families were sitting… and he was slightly miffed at the guy making the omelets.
      * There was a little… nudging…
        + “table #4 still needs the feta and spinach omelet...
        + … and table #16 needs the bacon and sausage with cheddar omelet…
        + Come on… the mickey mouse waffles are getting cold…”
    - From a distance… the mom related how she felt the tension rising.
  + Then the Head Chef came over… and said something to the effects of…
    - “Don’t panic…. When you panic… you make mistakes… the mistakes will make things worse.
      * Start with this… then move ahead.”
  + The Mom related “I came looking for a mango smoothie and left with wisdom.”
* 2000 years ago, there was a church filled with incredible blessings….
  + If you think about
    - the buffet line of speakers that came to the Church… they had some of the greatest communicators…
      * The Porterhouse steak… the Apostle Paul (1 Cor. 3:5)
      * The buttered lobster… Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5)
  + If we consider…
    - The talented people that were already in the church (1 Cor. 9)[[1]](#footnote-1)…
      * Healing… helping… administrating (1 Cor. 12:28)
  + It is almost an embarrassment of riches….
    - The lavish provisions God has given to His BODY (1 Cor. 12) far excels anything else in creation (even cruise lines).
* On the cruise ship… the Chef spoke up… they were surrounded with tremendous blessings… but needed the insight… don’t panic.
  + In 1 Corinthians… God’s word addresses a gifted… talented… richly blessed people… and declares… we will miss it all… if we don’t have love.
    - LOVE is indispensable.

Reading of God’s Word

***13****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.****9****For we know in part and we prophesy in part,****10****but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.****11****When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.****12****For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

***13****So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

**Preaching God’s Word**

1. Better than Spiritual Gifts (vs. 1-2)
   1. There are two “bookends” to this wonderful chapter...
      1. 1 Cor. 12:31 -  ***31****But earnestly desire the higher gifts.*
         1. The word there is where we get our word “Charismatic”
   2. 1 Cor. 14:1 - *and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts,* 
      * 1. The word there is close to our word “Pneumatic” or “Spiritual”.
           1. All the passion and service… working… and efforts… may miss the more excellent way[[2]](#footnote-2)…

Gal. 5:6 – *faith working through love*

* + 1. Love is better than spiritual gifts.
       1. Beloved, you may not have the gifts that others have.
          1. But God did not give them gifts for them to get “kudos”…
          2. Nor to be impressed with one another.

Phil Ryken – “The Love Chapter is not for lovers, primarily, but for all the loveless people in the church who think that their way of talking about God, or worshipping God, or serving God, or giving to God is better that everyone else’s.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

* 1. *13 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.* 
     1. There is a movement in these verses from the lesser to the greater things that people would have appreciated…
        1. Tongue of men and of angels – all city linebacker
        2. Prophetic power – all state receiver
        3. Understand all mysteries and knowledge – First-team All SEC
        4. Faith to move mountains – Hall of Fame
     2. #1 – Tongues of men and angels
        1. Speaking with clarity and authority the gospel of Jesus Christ like on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2)[[4]](#footnote-4)
        2. Speaking in Angel – clearly angels and humans spoke in a common language in the Bible (Mary and Gabriel understood each other)… some take this phrase as if it were a language of angels spoken in heaven….
           1. Illustration from Sinclair Ferguson[[5]](#footnote-5): If you studied “French” in college and then went to Paris to practice your “je ne sais pas’ with Parisiens…. It would be cool.

But how much cooler would it be if you could practice “angel” on angels?

* + - * 1. POINT: if you can speak “angel” but don’t have love…

You’re like the hand held castanets that children play with to terrorize adults.[[6]](#footnote-6)

* + - 1. In the first century, metalworking was a major industry in Corinth.
         1. You see these craftsmen with gongs and cymbals….

Hear the rich resonating sounds they make…

* + - * 1. Paul is saying don’t go tone-deaf in thinking that you are making the same sound.

A noisy gong… or a clanging cymbal is a

**sounding … tinkling**—*sound* without soul or feeling: such are “tongues” without *charity*.[[7]](#footnote-7)

* + 1. #2 – Prophetic Powers
       1. Imagine if you could be like Joseph and reveal the future to Pharaoh…years of plenty and years of famine.[[8]](#footnote-8)
          1. Theologians call this “fore-telling”
       2. What if you were like Moses… speaking with God face to face… then “standing regularly between God and his people to convey God word to them (Deut. 5:5).[[9]](#footnote-9)
          1. Theologians call this “forth-telling”.
       3. Point: It would be humanly impressive… yet beloved… even Judas was able to work miracles.
          1. That is why there is a sobering statement by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount….

Matt. 7:22ff - ***22****On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’****23****And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’*

* + 1. #3 – Mysteries and Knowledge
       1. Key word here… “all”
          1. Illustration: Most people follow the football during a game… but coaches note all the movements of the players.

They are able to follow the pattern of the other team’s strategy of only 11 men… and then come up with a plan for… only 11 men.

Here the idea is noting what God is doing in the cosmos.

* + - * 1. Think of Daniel… standing before Nebuchadnezzar… no other human has the education that can match this spiritual knowledge of Biblical truth

Rev. 10 - *mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.*

* + - * 1. Most barely understand the dynamics of 22 men trying to make it 10 yards…

How much could we understand all the ways of God’s mysteries.

* + - 1. POINT: Even if you could understand all mysteries and all knowledge, without love everything would be in vain.[[10]](#footnote-10)
    1. #4 – Absolute faith
       1. For clarity… all believers have saving faith…
          1. But this is talking about the gift of faith (Matt. 7:22)… as Anthony Thiselton says…

“An especially robust, infectious, bold, trustful faith may well be a special gift that preforms a special task within a community faced with seemingly insuperable problems.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

* + - * 1. There is a buoyancy in their life… “God has got this.”

Everyone else is like the disciples during the storm who cry out “Don’t you care, Jesus.”

This person is confident “My master and our Lord can still the storm.”

* + - 1. But if they don’t have love… Without “love” prophecy, knowledge, and faith, are not what they seem[[12]](#footnote-12)… they are nothing.
  1. But it is even worse… it says… “I am nothing.”
     1. There is an old saying… you are what you eat.
        1. I love dum-dum suckers… can you tell?
     2. There is a similar saying… you become what you worship.
        1. A gifted person… can worship themselves… and sin is a “turning in” on yourself… being consumed with self… and becoming nothing.
  2. Transition: But there is something greater than gifts… and something better than…

1. Better than Spiritual Services (vs. 3)
   1. *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.*
      1. In view here is Not our “gifting”, but our “giving”
         1. This verse is one of those passages that makes “good works”… Good works.[[13]](#footnote-13)
            1. It is not just the action… it is also the motive.
      2. Christians… when you serve… remember why…
         1. Motive… the glory of God.
            1. 1 Cor. 10:31 - *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
         2. Remember the Sermon on the Mount
            1. Matt. 6:2, 5, 16 - ***2****“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*
            2. ***5****“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*
            3. ***16****“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.*
         3. John Calvin – “The main truth in the passage is this -- that as love is the only rule of our actions, and the only means of regulating the right use of the gifts of God, nothing, in the absence of it, is approved of by God, however magnificent it may be in the estimation of men. For where it is wanting, the beauty of all virtues is mere tinsel -- is empty sound -- is not worth a straw -- nay more, is offensive and disgusting.”[[14]](#footnote-14)
      3. Gave away all we had to follow you (Peter)…. Elder brother when he sees the prodigal returning home is irritated…[[15]](#footnote-15)
         1. I’ve been working like a slave… Every day my body is broken in labor for you like Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego were tossed in the fire (Dan. 3).
            1. The elder brother’s efforts revealed that all his service was not done with gratitude to the Father, nor with hope for the return of a brother, nor with faith to God.
      4. At the end of the day… we are merely unprofitable servants who have merely done our duty (Luke 17).[[16]](#footnote-16)
   2. Point: There is something better than spiritual gifting…I am nothing.
      1. Or spiritual services…I gain nothing…
         1. What is better than being the most gifted person in the room or the most experienced in person in the community?
            1. 1 Tim. 1:5 - ***5****The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*
   3. Transition: How do you get that?
2. Bestowed only by Spiritual Grace
   1. Love is indispensable.
      1. It is better than spiritual gifts…
      2. It is better than spiritual service…
      3. It is bestowed only by spiritual grace.
   2. Christian… are you still enjoying your first love?
      1. Rev. 2 – To the Church in Ephesus
         1. ***2****“‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.*
            1. They discerned between gifting.
         2. ***3****I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*
            1. They offered service.
         3. ***4****But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*
            1. But they were missing Jesus as the Lover of their soul.

Friends… This passage is a portrait of our Savior[[17]](#footnote-17)… **4**Jesus is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; Jesus is not arrogant **5**or rude. Jesus does not insist on its own way; Jesus is not irritable or resentful; **6**Jesus does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7**Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

* + - 1. Here is the one who strengthens you to love well.
  1. Not a Christian… Jesus makes known the love of God.
     1. Here is the Son of God who could have called an army of angels to his side on the cross, yet he instead pleaded… Father, forgive them they know not what they are doing.
        1. Here is the man who could speak with all prophetic power and for you was silent in Herod’s court so that you would be forgiven in God’s presence.
           1. Here is the man who understood all mysteries and all knowledge yet was condemned by Pilate.

Here is the one who gave up his body so that you this day would know the power of his resurrection (1 Cor. 15).

* + - 1. Jesus Christ was regarded as nothing… so that you would have all that you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).
  1. Conclusion
     1. Remember the servers with mickey mouse waffles and omelets.
        1. “Don’t panic…. When you panic… you make mistakes… the mistakes will make things worse.
     2. Remember the gospel.
        1. Remember the love of God… when you forget the love of God you prize gifts… and service… then you remember the cross (1 Cor. 1)… you serve one another in love.

1. In ch. 9 it had to do with individual self-denial for the sake of the common good; here, in ch. 13, it has to do with the positive corollary: the priority of love for sustaining the common good.

   Stephen C. Barton, “1 Corinthians,” in Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1342. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Charles Hodge – “… love is superior to all extraordinary gifts.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Philip Graham Ryken, *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “…with the eloquence which was so much admired at Corinth (for example, Apollos, Ac 18:24; compare 1 Co 1:12), and with the command of various languages, which some at Corinth abused to purposes of mere ostentation (1 Co 14:2, &c.). Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 2* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sinclair Ferguson, *Love came down at Christmas*, 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “Two kinds are noticed (Ps 150:5), the loud or clear, and the high-sounding one: hand cymbals and finger cymbals, or castanets. The sound is sharp and piercing.” Jamieson, Fausset, and David Brown, 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ryken, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kistemaker*, 1 Corinthians*, 454. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Kistermaker, 454. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Anthony Thiselton, *First Corinthians* NIGTC [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/jfbcomm?ref=Bible.1Co13.2&off=389&ctx=ulse+of+His+Spirit.+~Without+%E2%80%9Clove%E2%80%9D+proph), vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. WCF XVI.7 - Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. John Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Caddyshack quote… “And I say, “Hey, Lama, hey, how about a little something, you know, for the effort, you know.” And he says, “Oh, uh, there won’t be any money, but when you die, on your deathbed, you will receive total consciousness.” So I got that goin’ for me, which is nice.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. WCF XVI.5 – “We cannot, by our best works, merit pardon of sin, or eternal life, at the hand of God, because of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by them we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from His Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God’s judgment.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ryken, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)