

How Can I Express Love?  
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1 Corinthians 13

- Let's start with a quiz! A quiz about FOOD.
- There are six words we use to describe how things TASTE. In other words, when we are describing how something tastes we use one of these six words. We'll say: "This tastes \_\_\_\_\_." Can you think of all six?
- Salty, Sweet, Sour, Bitter, Savory and Spicy. (Some might say a 7<sup>th</sup> is Tart).
- Question #2 on our quiz – Without saying the word how could you describe the taste? For example: Without saying salty how would you describe salty?
- Think about SWEET for a moment.
- If I bake your favorite cake or pie and leave out the sugar. When you take a bite what would you say? It's not SWEET.
- It's looks like a cake; but there's a MISSING (what?) \_\_\_\_\_.  
INGREDIENT

Statement:

Sadly, many churches (and many Christians) today are like a beautiful cake that was baked without the sugar. Looks great but there's no sweetness. The missing ingredient is LOVE.

- This morning we're studying 1 Corinthians chapter 13.
- We may know it as THE LOVE CHAPTER.
- How many times have you been to a wedding and heard this chapter read?
- That's fine, and appropriate --- but one of the basic rules of Bible study is that we need to study scripture IN CONTEXT.
- This section on LOVE comes immediately after what we studied about last week.
- Question: Who remembers what we studied about last week in 1 Corinthians 12?
- Spiritual Gifts – This church in Corinth had been MIS-USING their SPIRITUAL GIFTS and Paul straightened them out. They had been using GIFTS as a way to MEASURE SPIRITUALITY. But Paul told them that EVERY believer has a gift they should use and how spiritual you are is not about which gift you have but how you USE them.
  
- Look at the last verse of chapter 12 from last week. Would someone read that verse?
- Paul said: "And I will show you a more excellent way."
- Now that you understand about using your SPIRITUAL GIFTS I'm going to show you THE MISSING INGREDIENT that makes this RECIPE we call the New Testament Church: LOVE.

In the first three verses Paul sets it up:

## 1 Corinthians 13

1If I speak in the tongues[a] of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames,[b] but have not love, I gain nothing.

- What is Paul saying in those three verses?
- I can have the most impressive gifts you can imagine, but if I don't have LOVE it means nothing.
- In one of her lesser known songs Dolly Parton put it in today's vernacular: "You ain't got nothin' if you ain't got love."
- As a young Sunday School teacher I used to be stumped that there were classes where the teacher just didn't seem to be that gifted or eloquent, yet the classes would stay strong and even grow. Being a little like these Corinthians I'd wonder: "Why would people keep coming back Sunday after Sunday to hear that teacher when there are other more gifted teachers down the hall?" Then God opened my eyes. Those classes had the missing ingredient: LOVE.

The lack of eloquence was overcome by an abundance of LOVE.

The poet Maya Angelou is quoted as saying:

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

It doesn't matter how gifted you are if your "cake is baked with no sugar"...lacking LOVE. It's all about the MOTIVE behind the gift.

- Now what kind of love is Paul writing about?
- Let's see how many Greek scholars we have in class today.
- The Greek language of Paul's day had four words for love.
  - STORGE (Stohr-gay) – Not used in the New Testament
  - EROS (EHR-ahs) – Also not used in the New Testament...do you know that one? Sexual or erotic love
  - PHILE (FIGH-lay) – Used about 20 times in the NT. What kind of love is PHILEO love? Brotherly love...Philadelphia
  - Finally, there is one more...anyone know what kind of love it is?
  - AGAPE (ah GAH pay) love – The unconditional love God has for his people.
- One of the commentators: "Christian love in the sense of showing sacrificial concern or interest in another. Such love results in ACTION."
- The love Paul writes about in this chapter is AGAPE or sacrificial, Christian love In the next several verses (4 – 7) Paul describes the QUALITIES of this kind of love

4Love 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.

- Paul gives us 15 qualities of this AGAPE love...seven about what LOVE DOES and eight about what LOVE DOES NOT DO
- The language of these verses is more beautiful in the KJV and even the NIV. But let's make sure we understand each of these qualities.

Eugene Peterson in The Message paraphrase puts them into TODAY'S LANGUAGE:

Love never gives up.  
Love cares more for others than for self.  
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.  
Love doesn't strut,  
Doesn't have a swelled head,  
Doesn't force itself on others,  
Isn't always "me first,"  
Doesn't fly off the handle,  
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,  
Doesn't revel when others grovel,  
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,  
Puts up with anything,  
Trusts God always,  
Always looks for the best,  
Never looks back,  
But keeps going to the end.

- Here's a little trick someone taught me years ago and I wrote it in my Bible. Look at these verses and wherever you see the word LOVE substitute YOUR NAME.
- Could someone describe YOU or ME with these words?
- It can be a CONVICTING and INTIMIDATING EXERCISE
- (Read through with some examples and expand on them)
- When you read through that list and ask yourself "Can I LIVE like that?" "Can I LOVE like that?" what is your response? NO WAY (Okay, maybe one or two said "I'm just like that!" there's a couple in every crowd!
- We say: There's NO WAY I can exhibit the kind of love Paul describes.
- Guess what? YOU'RE RIGHT! There is NO WAY you or I can churn up this kind of LOVE.
- Where does it have to come from? The Holy Spirit
- Some say that this section of scripture is like Galatians 5:22-23...do you know what that is? The Fruit of the Spirit (Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self Control).
- Some say this section of scripture is a description of the character of God

- Both statements would be accurate
- You and I in our sinful nature cannot GENERATE this kind of AGAPE LOVE

Oswald Chambers:

*The fountains from which love flows are in God, not in us. It is absurd to think that the love of God is naturally in our hearts, as a result of our own nature. His love is there only because it "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit . . ." (Romans 5:5 ).*

*Romans 5:5 (New International Version)*

*5And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*

- Picture a faucet pouring water into a vessel and that water running over the sides.
- Agape love comes from the heart of God to the heart of a believer and God keeps pouring until it overflows to everything and everyone around us!
- But some of us have our cups turned upside down (pause)
- Ever go to a breakfast or a dinner and they have the table set with the coffee cups upside down? Why do they do that? What do you do to SIGNAL that you want coffee? What if you DON'T want coffee? Leave the cup upside down. "None for me, thanks."
- When you and I became believers God gave us a cup so he could fill it up with His love.
- Some of us have the cup God gave us when He gave us SALVATION but we keep it upside down. "None for me thanks!"
- "I'm trying to cut back on the love of God!"
- "That love of God is TOO MUCH caffeine for me!"
- "I might get all jittery and LOVE somebody!"
- "I might get all hopped up on the love of God and FORGIVE somebody!"
- "I might...turn the other cheek instead of insisting on my rights!"
- Susan's book: "You're Not Sick; You're Thirsty!" (All about the need for hydration)
- Why do church people fuss and fight?
- We're DEHYDRATED! Our cups are upside down!
- Why do church people insult each other and jockey for power?
- We're DEHYDRATED! We're not drinking in our daily requirement of God's love!
- So how do we FILL UP on God's love?
- By saying Lord, "Here's my cup...fill it up!"
- Sometimes its not that we've turned our cup upside down but that we won't sit still long enough for God to fill it up.
- Ever tried to fill someone's cup when they won't stand still?
- Some of us are stubborn and have turned our cups upside down

- Some of us won't sit still long enough for God to refill our cups with His love
- But one thing's for sure:
- We can't LOVE the way Paul describes in this chapter with an empty cup!

Let's move on through the rest of this chapter.

In the next few verses Paul taught that this kind of LOVE LASTS

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- Verse 8 Paul says LOVE NEVER FAILS; LOVE NEVER DIES.
- All these gifts will come to an end but God's LOVE will live on.
- Here's a message for those of you who have ministry roles:
- When we get to Heaven some of you will have to CHANGE JOBS
- When we get to Heaven and when Christ comes back what jobs in the church will no longer exist? Outreach; Evangelism; Prophecy; Knowledge;
- Scott White will have a job because we'll all be praising God...but some of us will have to change jobs.
- Paul said "when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."
- But even though these GIFTS we have will pass away, LOVE NEVER DIES
- Verse 11: "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child..."
- Why do you think Paul put that in the middle of all this?
- He's been writing about the love of God and all the sudden he throws in this part about being childish and putting away childish things.
- Why?
- Remember when you were a kid and you had all kinds of crazy ideas about how things work?
- Then you became an adult and the reality of things became clear.

Warren Wiersbe:

*There is a maturing process for the church as a whole (Eph. 4:11–16) and also for the individual believer (1 Cor. 14:20; 2 Peter 3:18). We will not be fully completed until Jesus returns, but we ought to be growing and maturing now. Children live for the temporary; adults live for the permanent. Love is enduring, and what it produces will endure.*

- Then Paul uses another illustration...a mirror
- In those days they didn't have the glass mirrors we have today

- Corinth was famous for their polished brass mirrors
- As good as that polished brass was...it was still a poor reflection of the real thing
- Example: Mirror APP on iPhones and iPods; Rearview mirror
- When it comes to knowing about Christ we've only seen a "poor reflection"
- But one day...we'll be FACE TO FACE with him

The old hymn:

Only faintly now I see Him,  
With the darkened veil between,  
But a blessed day is coming,  
When His glory shall be seen.

Face to face I shall behold Him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face in all His glory,  
I shall see Him by and by!

(Face to Face with Christ My Savior; Words:Carrie E. Breck. Music:Grant C. Tullar)

- One day all our questions will be answered
- And when that day comes our SPIRITUAL GIFTS will have passed away
- What will remain is LOVE

Are you and I trying to exercise our SPIRITUAL GIFTS but not showing God's love?  
People will see right through us!

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*"Who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you're saying."*

Verse 13 is Paul's summary:

13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

The Takeaway:

- It doesn't matter what your gifts are if you don't show God's love...you're just making a racket!
- If we don't show God's love, we're like a cake with no sugar...and with one taste anyone will know we have a missing ingredient.
- God's love is POURED into our hearts and the OVERFLOW touches others. But we can't LOVE LIKE THIS unless we allow him to regularly REFILL our cup with His love.