

Love - Part 3

I Corinthians 13

Okay - here we go. Part 3 on Love. Praise God for His love for us. In essence, through the Spirit, He has given us the ability to love others in ways we could not without His supernatural strength.

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.'

(from Grace Notes)

Love is to be the characteristic of the believer's life.

God commands believers to love everyone, even our enemies, even the most obnoxious, impossible-to-love people in our lives. The ability to love everyone in the world, even enemies, comes only as a result of Christian growth, the development of a structure in the soul which includes the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22 ff), and the development of a Relaxed Mental Attitude as a result of having no mental attitude sins toward other people.

Any Christian who is consistently growing in Christ will have a steady advance in the Christian Way of Life, along with the ability to love other people genuinely and have an honest concern for their spiritual well-being.

1) Why don't we accept people's character flaws?

(from Grace Notes)

Love has good manners. It has respect for others which results in a set of Christ-centered standards. It has discretion. It knows what is proper and when.

They say respect is earned. I have found that it is not always the case. Often, people want or even demand respect and they don't earn it, or even attempt to earn it. They just expect it.

Truthfully though, as Christians, we should have respect for everyone --- even those that don't deserve it. It's what sets us apart from others.

2) Why should you show respect to those who don't earn or deserve it?

(from Grace Notes)

Love does not pursue selfish advantage. It does not have primary concern for personal appetites or for social status; but it shows concern for needs of the one loved and families and friends involved.

Selfish versus self less --- and never shall the twain meet!

3) How does a person become less selfish?

(from Grace Notes)

Love is not touchy. Love is not hyper-sensitive or easily hurt. It does not take things personally. It is not emotionally involved with personal opinions, so that to reject ideas is to reject the one giving them.

Learning to not take things personal --- that is the key. Each of us should have little tricks or ideas on how to defuse our own pride, ego, emotions --- when things get personal. You don't have to take things personal --- even if they are personal.

4) a) Name something you've taken personal lately.

4) b) How can you not take it personal? (Tool)

(from Grace Notes)

Love doesn't compare self with others for self-justification. It doesn't use others' sin to excuse personal weaknesses.

5) How do people excuse their behaviors by blaming others?

It's always easy to say, *"I only did or said this, because you...."*

We must learn to accept personal responsibility for our actions. Just as the devil doesn't make you do it --- others don't "make" you do anything either.

We choose: unforgiveness, anger, hatred, violence, words...

"Love is in active fellowship."

See the following two pages for more about "Love" from *Grace Notes*.

Next week - "Doctrine of Sin"

This Friday - Easter service and potluck

Ephesians Lesson 16

Ephesians 5:1

Therefore, be followers of God, as dear children;

The word "therefore" indicates that this verse and the last verse of chapter 4 are closely related. The gracious forgiveness that God has provided to us is shown in 4:32, and now we are commanded to imitate it in practice.

"followers" is MIMETAI in the Greek, "to imitate". We have been made children of God, by grace; so we are by constant perseverance and attention to become more like the heavenly Father. Christ is our example; to become more like Christ is to imitate the Father.

1 Peter 2:21,22, "For even hereunto were you called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

To "follow" God we must be guided by His thinking, divine viewpoint. We use the Word of God, which is lodged in our souls, to make the decisions which set the course of our lives.

The whole context of Ephesians 4 and 5 deals with how a Christian moves into the proper function of the Christian life, the "imitation of God", to perform the work which the Father has set for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

The Christian life is the moving away from our former manner of life, the worldly culture and lifestyle, towards a godly culture and life of production characterized by the fruit of the spirit and Christ-like behavior.

These chapters show us what the new life looks like. In the new life the Christian:

- Has an enlightened understanding; no longer alienated from God through ignorance
- Is being renewed constantly in the spirit of the mind, to create a new man

- Puts away lying and speaks truth to every man
- No longer steals but does honest work so that he can be generous to others
- Is characterized by gracious speech in the place of foolish or empty talking
- Is kind and forgiving to others, remembering God's forgiveness received at salvation.

How to acquire this kind of life is also spelled out in these chapters. Through communication of the Word of God, an academic process, and by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual process, a Christian replaces human viewpoint with divine viewpoint. Edification takes place and a Christian "speaking the truth in love, grows up into His in all things, who is the Head, even Christ."

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.

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Any Christian who is consistently growing in Christ will have a steady advance in the Christian Way of Life, along with the ability to love other people genuinely and have an honest concern for their spiritual well-being. The following statements are a paraphrase of the description of impersonal love found in 1 CORINTHIANS 13.

Love is slow to lose patience. It doesn't demonstrate irritations or reflect anger or have a quick temper. It has fully accepted the character of the one loved.

Love looks for a way to be constructive. Love is actively creative. It is able to recognize needs. It discovers successful methods of improving or contributing to the other's life.

Love is not possessive. Love does not hold exclusive control where one is allowed little or no freedom to fulfill himself apart from the one who loves him.

Love is not anxious to impress. Love doesn't seek to make an impression or to create an image for personal gain.

Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. It is not self-centered. It has the ability to change and to accept change. It is flexible. It doesn't allow, or expect, life to revolved around itself.

Love has good manners. It has respect for others which results in a set of Christ-centered standards. It has discretion. It knows what is proper and when.

Love does not pursue selfish advantage. It does not have primary concern for personal appetites or for social status; but it shows concern for needs of the one loved and families and friends involved.

Love is not touchy. Love is not hyper-sensitive or easily hurt. It does not take things personally. It is not emotionally involved with personal opinions so that to reject ideas is to reject the one giving them.

Love does not keep account of evil. Love doesn't review wrongs which have been forgiven. It does not dwell on past sins. It destroys evidence of past mistakes wherever possible.

Love doesn't gloat over the wickedness of other people.

Love doesn't compare self with others for self-justification. It doesn't use others' sin to excuse personal weaknesses.

Love is glad with all godly men when truth prevails.

Love is in active fellowship with dedicated Christians. It is occupied with spiritual objectives.

Love knows no limit to its forbearance.

Love has the ability to live with the inconsistencies of others. It has empathy for the problems of others.

There is no end to Love's trust. Love believes in the person loved and in the person's worth without question. It has no reason to doubt the person's integrity.

There is no fading of Love's confidence. Love is not fickle. It has perfect peace and confidence that God is primarily responsible for introducing the right partner at the right time.

Love has unlimited endurance. Love is able to outlast anything. It is able to endure all obstacles and even love in the face of unreturned love.

These are the characteristics of Christ's love for us; and we are to imitate Him in our love for others.

"an offering and sacrifice to God"

Jesus Christ's death on the Cross for us, His work of atonement, is represented in the offerings and sacrifices made by the Jews in Old Testament times.

The sin offering, for example, presents Christ atoning for the guilt of sin (Heb. 13:11,12). It shows Christ as actually burdened with the believer's sin, standing in the sinner's place as his substitute. This offering tells of the Lord's death as presented in Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and 1 Peter 2:24. It carefully guards the holiness of Him who "was made sin for us."

The trespass offering shows Christ's atoning for the damage caused by sin and has in view the injury of the sin as opposed to the guilt of the sin. This aspect of the trespass offering is seen in Psalm 51:4, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest."

In the burnt offerings, the idea of sin is not as conspicuous, and sets forth Christ offering Himself without spot to God to perform God's will with joy; the offering is a sweet savor to God, so-called because it deals with Christ in His own perfections and devotion to the Father's will, as opposed to the non-sweet savor offerings which show Christ carrying the believer's sin.