

1Corinthians 13:1-7
Dig Deeper, October 8, 2003

Chapter 13 is well known as **the love chapter**. Hopefully familiarity doesn't breed contempt. Verses 4 through 8a often are used and quoted out of the context of the whole chapter and the epistle itself. That isn't bad, for these verses are a marvelous description of the attributes of what is known as "agape love." They go far to nourish relationships, such as marriages, families, assemblies and businesses. These fourteen qualities easily stand alone. Yet we may rightly ask why here in this setting? In Paul's introduction in the first chapter when he commanded the great and many blessings, he notably doesn't mention love. In fact it isn't until chapter eight that he mentions love at all, and there it is in the sense of being lacking among them. ch. 8:1 *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*"

They put knowledge and achievement above self sacrificing, tender care for one another. Note the use of the antiquated term "charity" in the KJV while still poetic, is somewhat misleading. It is not merely giving to those in need that is meant. Although one also can gain much insight from the concept of giving, for agape love is simply that, sacrificial giving of self, goods, energy, attention, and the like, to benefit another. To another who, incidentally, often doesn't "deserve it." Showing such love glorifies God because He is Love, 1John 4:8,16. And we see His infinite Love in the gift of His only begotten Son to redeem us from our sins. Receive it, if you haven't already!

Note that the love described here is not merely a "warm fuzzy feeling" toward another or even a warm demonstration of affection, but a motivating force calling into action beneficial behaviors and conduct. In the context of the epistle, love is brought before the Corinthian believers here as the only suitable motivation and power for their use of the wonderful spiritual gifts they possessed. The first three verses refer to use of spiritual gifts and give several examples of great powers and achievements humanly speaking which are said to be something else apart from love. Instead, according to the examples given, I cause confusion, I am nothing, I profit nothing. This despite using a spiritual gift received from the Lord to do something I and others may think is good.

In Paul's examples, **tongues, knowledge**, and even **faith** and **charity** are called to account. These were truly gifts from the ascended Lord Jesus Christ received through the Holy Spirit. They are included in the list in chapter 12. They don't need any human authorization for their use. Nor are they put under the control of any human agency, including the Assembly. They are truly **free gifts**. And they are from the Lord. Yet they were apparently being misused. Note: **They were so free that they could be misused**. Paul has to bring things back into proper perspective. The gifts, freely given to be

freely used, were to be used **responsibly** for the Lord who gave them. He gave them for the glory of God and the edification of His assembly and the benefit of men. This can only occur if they are used with love. And in subjection to the One who gave them. They are free gifts by the grace of the giver. Otherwise their use for edification would be lowered to a level of paid obedience (employee), forced obedience (slavery), or involuntary obedience (robotic). The Lord in His infinite grace lifts us up above these positions, out of the condition we were in when He found us (and saved us). He gives each of His own a loving heart to voluntarily give as He gives, and to be enthusiastic channels of His Love grace and mercy to others. Let Him!

We all have a natural tendency to act carnally, in the flesh (ch.3) as they were, and to use our gifts **as we see fit**. While we do not need human ordination or other authorization to be used of the Lord we do need to submit to His use of us. Prayerful study and application of the Scriptures will move us into a useful, fruitful life **for HIM**. This is the better way referred to in 12:31.

The Corinthians were not only each **personally directing** the use of their gifts they were apparently misusing them (abusing) them. They were using them to put on displays that appealed to the flesh and drew the applause and accolades of their audiences and peers. Naturally followings (groupies) developed around those with certain gifts. These gifted men were exciting and they generated excitement. The concept of excitement is fleshly, not of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 1 Eloquence or foreign tongues, even the supposed tongues of angelic beings, intriguing and wonderful as they might be, are merely confusing noise if not spoken in love and with love.

Verse 2 I am nothing if I have prophetic revelations, vast supernatural knowledge of profound truth, profound philosophic reasoning, and knowledge of things not generally known to men if I have not learned, held and communicated them in love. Lord said that faith able to move mountains was but as a mustard seed. ut love, is said to be a nothing, a nobody. One with faith to move a mountain literally, or figuratively some immense humanly impossible obstacle, if not done in love is said to be nothing, a nobody. See Matthew 4:5-7 for a related example. The Lord will Himself demonstrate TRUE faith when He returns to the Mount of Olives and it parts, like the Red Sea did, to provide an escape for trapped Jewish believers at the end of the Great Tribulation. Read about it in Zechariah 14:3-5. The Jewish believers of that day will have to have great faith in this prophetic scripture to enter and pass through a freshly formed chasm in the mountain. Yet won't they pray in faith for His appearing as prophesied by Zechariah?

Verse 3 Giving to the needy our personal belongings, even our tools and goods that we need to earn our living, is nothing if our alms are done without love and merely to impress men,

Matthew 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

On the other hand such sacrificial giving characterized the New Testament believers from the beginning (see Acts chapters 2, 5, and 6). Paul later works with these very same Corinthians to accumulate and transport a gift for the needy saints in Judea, ch 16 and 2Corinthians 8 and 9.

I suppose the greatest sacrificial gift of all would be delivering my body to be burned. Yet without love it would profit me nothing. It would be like wood, hay and stubble, ch 3:12-14. We see suicide bombers dying for a cause, and it is worthless waste of life. Is taking the death penalty for killing an abortionist doctor an act motivated by love? God knows. Just don't assume intense faith or costly sacrifice is automatically good or glorifying to God. But don't hesitate to trust Him and stand for Him even unto death, in love for Him. Paul's tumultuous life of faith is a wonderful example for us. Yet he was given a thorn in the flesh to prevent him from becoming self important.

Now in verses 4-7 he talks about **LOVE**. Fourteen statements about love are set before us. Two things love does are mentioned first then eight that it doesn't do, followed by four more that it does. Much has been written on this passage and most of the verses are self explanatory, therefore comments will be mostly general except for a few specifics.

Verse 4a&b The first two have to do with the attitude toward others which encourages unity among us. Our being slow to lose patience, enduring irritating or difficult people and returning kindness are essential ingredients to maintain the unity for which Christ died.

Verses 4c-6a Next are some attitudes which love **does not** entertain in the heart. These bad attitudes emerge from self consciousness, self centeredness, immersion in self interest, all of these are but works generated from innate, instinctive raw pride.

4c. envy; jealousy;

4d. vaunting self, self exaltation, a braggart, boastful; vainglorious; arrogant, insolent and rash, parades self;

4e. puffed up, proud, cherishing inflated ideas of one's own importance, anxious to impress others, haughty:

5a. unseemly behavior, rude, without good manners,

ambitious, unbecoming behavior;

5b. seeking one's own [things], self seeking, pursuing selfish advantage;

5c. easily provoked, short fuse, touchy; fretful resentful;

5d. thinketh evil, imputing evil motives to acts of another, keeping accounts of offenses suffered, or committed.

6a Furthermore true love never rejoices in iniquity (unrighteousness, injustice), whether found in self, family, fellow-believer, assembly or lost sinner, Romans 1:32. Love does not overlook sin, it deals with it in a gentle but firm manner. And certainly love doesn't rejoice or gloat over another having been caught misbehaving.

None of these proceeds from love! But it seems easier to recognize these traits in others than in ourselves.

Now some more of what love is and does.

Verses 6b-7

6b. Love moves the believer's delight in truth of scripture, and when the truth is taught held and practiced.

7a. Beareth all things, bears up under every thing that comes, is protective.

7b. Love believes all things, believes the best in everyone and every situation. Always trusts first, until given evidence not to. Believers are to have a certain sweet, artless gullibility about them, even if a suspicious nature might seem more warranted. This does not condone simple carelessness as to whom we believe or fellowship with. We are given tests to expose liars, and any who seek to harm the sheep will soon be exposed by the Shepherd. Take care. Evil communications corrupt. Chapters 5, 8, 10, 11 and 15 treat real situations where we are to be on our guard.

7c. Love hopes all things. For instance we can believe the best and hope for the best when someone caught in sin claims to have repented and gives some evidence of it. We do not normally need to wait long periods of time to see if they might fall again before we receive them.

7d. Finally, love endures all things. What ever hardship or problems the Lord allows are given in His love and are to be met and accepted by that same love which He has instilled in us. What examples we have in the scriptures, from Abel through John in exile!

Note that 1John 4 is the other "love chapter" of the New Testament. **We love because He first loved us. 1John 4:19.**

By Ron Canner, October 8, 2003

Afterthought.

What happens if we attempt to move mountains with our faith that God doesn't want moved? Does He move them? What if we do it by the faith He has given us without love? People get hurt when literal mountains are moved.