

Read 1 Corinthians 13

What – One of the most moving and often quoted chapters in the bible, Paul used chapter 13 of his first reply to the church at Corinth to remind them about love. Corinth was a city full of deceit and debauchery and the Christians there were really struggling with living out their faith in such an environment. Paul reminded them of love's virtues. He told them the importance of love, and he gave them hope with his emphatic declaration, "The greatest of these (faith, hope and love) is love."

Why – This scripture is as important today as it was then and for a very similar reason. Love is important. The scriptures remind us that "God is Love" (1 John :16). But what we fail to see is that what God means by love is not what we have come to understand that word to mean. Because of that, we badly misinterpret this scripture and cause ourselves much pain. We are called to love, like the Corinthians. Love, however, is not the "mushy feeling" that we ascribe to it today. The Corinthian church would have heard a very different message in the Greek. **Agape** is a word most of us in the church know, and this is the word Paul uses here to make his point about love. It would have had a stark and defined meaning for the Corinthians as opposed to the "erotic" love they saw around them. The same contrast stands for us. God was not saying here that we are to "feel mushy about those around us". That would be "**eros**" in the Greek. No, agape love demands a commitment from us. Agape is about sacrifice. You would do anything for the one you love with agape love. This is very different from the "come and go" love we share today. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO "FALL OUT OF" AGAPE LOVE.

WOW – The real beauty to this scripture is that when we look at it from the standpoint of **agape** love, the scripture takes on new meaning. Verses 1-3 showed that God's gifts are useless unless used for the right reason. Think about this in terms of how you interpret love. Are God's gifts useless unless they make you "feel good"? That is what many in the church teach today because of a bad understanding of "love". Rather God was saying that His gifts to you take on power when you are committed to Him. WOW. Sounds like Philippians 4:13, doesn't it? Verses 4-8 told us how to treat those we love. I have heard preachers tell people they should treat people like this verse says because they are "in love" with them. Again, if our motivation is to treat each other patiently and kindly because it "feels good" we are in big trouble. We will all fail. Sometimes "loving" someone is difficult. It is no wonder so many people "fall out of love". The minute it hurts, our modern interpretation of this verse makes no sense. Instead we treat people kindly and with patience because we are COMMITTED, to them and more importantly to Jesus. Agape is the only way to love others like Jesus loved us (See John 13:34). Finally, in verses 8-12 Paul showed us that if we are to be mature in Christ (hopefully that is our goal!!!) we must learn to love. Agape love is the result of practice. As we know Jesus more, we are more able to love like He did. Paul reminded us that love is the only thing that lasts. It is the result of a life lived FOR and WITH God.

Let's give Him glory with our lives. I am confident that if we do the right things for the right reasons (agape) God will fill us with the good feeling (eros) we so eagerly desire.