
INTRODUCTION

We live in a culture where the word “love” is used so often it has become somewhat of a cliché. We say we love God, but we also say we love our spouse or family, ice cream, and some TV shows and movies. In all fairness, the Greek language has at least 3 different forms of the word “love” while the English language has one. In the Greek language love can mean “eros” which is a sensual emotion found between a husband and wife. This word is not used in scripture. Another Greek form of love is “phillio”, or a brotherly love or friendship. The form of love Paul is using is “agape”, which is a love that is not based on emotion or personal relationship. This love is unconditional and based on the will of the one who loves. In our text, Paul clarifies that love (agape) is not a feeling. He stresses that nothing we do can possibly bring honor to God if we don’t do it in love. We can use a simple mathematical formula to express exactly what we mean. $X - \text{LOVE} = 0$ Where $X = \text{any spiritual gift}$.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

² And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

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Paul’s first example is speaking in tongues. This Spirit-given gift to speak foreign languages was very important to the Corinthians. Then how important would it be if someone be who could speak in a language which only angels could speak and understand? As high and lofty as this gift is, Paul is telling us that if this gift is used for selfish motives such as, self-aggrandizement or to show how spiritual one is, that person will sound like a noisy, out-of-tune instrument. Therefore a tongue that is empowered by the Spirit must also be guided by genuine love.

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Here are more examples of spiritual gifts. Suppose someone has the gift of prophecy. This is a gift that actually allows a believer to speak about situations directly from the mind of God or is able to accurately predict the future. That would be pretty impressive to the body of Christ. Or suppose someone or the same person has the gift of knowledge to understand mysteries of the life we live in now or the life we will live with the Master after our time on earth is over? Or, suppose someone has an unflinching faith (again not salvation faith) that could actually cause a mountain to be cast into the sea? The mountain could be represented by any obstacle that attempts to prevent the believer from living the life God would like us to live. Still, no matter the enormity of the gift, if the one gifted doesn’t use those gifts with love, that person is nothing in the eyes of God!

³ **And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.**

In this verse Paul begins by talking about giving. Although this gift is not listed in our current text, it is listed as a gift in Romans 12:6-8. All Christians should be givers, but there are some who give under discernment and give not only goods but services time and money to those in need without a second thought or without a church meeting to get it done! (Well!) Then Paul goes on to say that even if a person would sacrifice their own body without love it would be a sacrifice that is hay and stubble and will burn at the bema seat of Christ.

In our next lesson we will discuss what love is and what love is not. There are those that talk a good love game but have a walk of shame. Here is a short story about a guy professing his love for his girl. He tells her he loves her so much he'd crawl through a field of broken glass just to be by her side. If he had to, he'd climb the highest mountain or swim across the ocean if that's what it would take for her to love him too. She was so impressed she invited him to go to church with her. He said he'd love to go to church with her - if it doesn't rain. If you're going to talk the talk you have to walk the walk.