

Love

1Cor13:1-13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. 13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Love is indispensable – with respect to evidence of the presence of the Spirit, authentic Christianity

- Speak in tongues – I am as a sounding gong (hollow) without love
- Prophetic powers, understand mysteries, faith to move mountains – I am nothing without love
- Give away all I have, deliver my body up to be burned in martyrdom – I gain nothing without love

Note 29: This is not to say that Paul recognizes no other ultimate test of authentic Christianity. For instance, Gal. 1:8–9 makes it clear that Paul holds certain doctrines to be essential to Christianity. But in the disparate claims of love and of “charismatic” gifts, only the former is indispensable.

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Characteristics of love expressed in interpersonal behaviour

- Not sentimental
- Not primarily about how we ‘feel’ toward others but our heart attitude and the behaviour that gives rise to. The characteristics from this passage make it clear that love is focussed on giving and not on getting
- The emotions follow that but are not the driver
- **Is patient**
 - Is slow to anger (Prov 19:11)
 - Is long-suffering in the face of injury or difficulties
 - Keeps on being loving time after time
 - Bears long with...
- **Is kind**
 - Seeks to benefit others, desires what is good for them and to be a source of that
 - Does acts of kindness
 - Is benevolent, pleasant, good-natured toward others
 - Responds to hurt with kindness
 - Is not ‘reactive’. That is, it does not seek to pay back the unrighteousness it receives but responds with righteousness and is gracious, kind and good
 - Unselfish
 - Compassionate and tender-hearted
- **Does not envy**
 - Does not covet, desire or want what belongs to another
 - Does not seek to advance at the expense of another
 - Does not resent the success of another
 - Has a sense of contentment

- **Does not boast**
 - Is not proud
 - Is not given to self-display, to extolling one's self or one's exploits excessively
 - Does not do or say things that are specifically intended to draw attention to one's success or woes
 - Does not behave or speak in a way designed to gain the adoration, acknowledgement or pity of others
 - Behaves with humility and is more interested in others being acknowledged or noticed than one's self
- **Is not arrogant**
 - Is not inflated, puffed up
 - Does not seek to be seen as more than or as better than others or what we really are
 - Is not given to self-admiration
 - Does not harbour prejudice. Does not prejudge others by seeing them as less than ourselves or discriminate according to personal preference or gain
- **Is not rude**
 - Is not unseemly or unbecoming toward others
 - Is not disrespectful, uncourteous or dishonouring
 - Is not impolite, but well mannered
 - Has a gracious consideration for others
 - In honour preferring each other
- **Does not insist on its own way**
 - Do not seek to control events, circumstances or the behaviour of others in accordance with what we want
 - Do not dominate in having our ideas accepted
 - Are even willing to give up what we are legitimately entitled to for the sake of others (Carson)
 - 'Lay down our life' for others / friends
 - Selfless
- **Is not irritable**
 - Is not easily provoked to anger or irritation based on others not doing / being what we want
 - Not provoked when our sense of comfort is disturbed or when we do not get what we want, when we want it
- **Is not resentful**
 - Harbours no thoughts of evil or harm toward another
 - Keeps no record of wrongs
 - Is forgiving and willing to cover over the wrongs suffered from another
 - Does not seek 'revenge' or to 'punish' another for the wrong they have done us – to make them pay
- **Does not rejoice at wrongdoing** – unrighteousness or injustice
 - Does not delight in pointing out wrong
 - Is not judgmental – not quick to judge
 - Are pained when others are wronged
 - Are also pained when others do wrong but because of their loss in this and not because of any sense of personal loss or disappointment
 - Do not view others through what we see to be their faults
- **Rejoices with the truth** – with the true facts, reality in any matter
 - Rejoices with others in what is right, true, righteous and just
 - We can lovingly help others in their struggles and with their faults because we have a focus on truth and righteousness and are not intent on judging the wrongdoing
- **Love always:** willingly putting aside our personal freedom and desires
 - **Bears all things**
 - Willing to suffer in order to protect, to cover another from harm, or threat (Carson)
 - Cover over their faults
 - **Believes all things**
 - Trusts others
 - Has confidence in them

- Generous in our openness and acceptance rather than suspicious or cynical (Carson)
- **Hopes all things**
 - Expects, waits for what is good – even in the face of potential disappointment
 - Does not entertain disappointment but chooses, holds on to, hope
- **Endures all things**
 - Waits patiently, even through suffering and even in the face of adverse ‘evidence’
- **Love never ends / fails**
 - It is constant and never falls away or has no power or effect

Compare with Eph 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- Love is a fruit of the Spirit – it is not achieved by our own effort alone
- Love is joyful
- Love is peace loving and resides in a heart that is at peace – has God’s rest
- Love is patient, kind, gentle and good toward others
- Love requires self-control

Questions to answer for myself

To what extent do I display each of these characteristics with those who are close to me?

To what extent do I display each of these characteristics with those I interact with on a regular basis?

To what extent do I display each of these characteristics with strangers or those I meet occasionally in the course of everyday life?

Who specifically can I display love to better than I do now?

What circumstances / contexts are there where I can display love better?

What specific aspects of love can I display better?

Permanence of love

- Remains for eternity – there will always be love as the greatest characteristic of personal righteousness, holiness and relational wholeness.

Two centuries ago, Jonathan Edwards probed the question as to what makes the church like heaven. His answer: it is love. The church’s manifestation in time of the glories that are yet to come is not accomplished in the gift of tongues, nor even in prophecy, giving, teaching. It is accomplished in love. One day all the charismatics who know the Lord and all the noncharismatics who know the Lord will have nothing to fight over; for the so-called charismatic gifts will have forever passed. At that point, both of these groups of believers will look back and thoughtfully contemplate the fact that what connects them with the world they have left behind is not the gift of tongues, nor animosity toward the gift of tongues, but the love they sometimes managed to display toward each other despite the gift of tongues. **The greatest evidence that heaven has invaded our sphere, that the Spirit has been poured out upon us, that we are citizens of a kingdom not yet consummated, is Christian love.**

Reference to: Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits*, ed. Tyrone Edwards (1852; reprint ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 323ff.

Note 77: Perhaps it should be said that from a broader, biblical perspective this test is always a necessary but not always a sufficient criterion. For instance, in his first epistle, John lays out three tests: a truth test revolving around christological confession, a moral test revolving around the Christian's principal obedience to Christ, and a love test—and John does not suggest that two out of three constitute a passing grade. Other tests are found elsewhere that serve to check any putative believer's claim to grace; for the New Testament writers are at one in believing that saving grace transforms a person. But although no biblical test is universally sufficient, a particular test may be sufficient in a particular context. In the context of Corinthian disputes over the χαρίσματα (charismata), Paul's test of love is both necessary and sufficient.

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- The whole spectrum of who God is, is poured into creation
 - Revealed in parts, stages, an aspect at a time. Who He is, is too rich and multifaceted to see all at once
 - Revealed in the world, His works, His Word
- Love is at the heart. It is found everywhere in scripture. E.g.:
 - Steadfast love / loving kindness a focus of who He is in OT
 - God so loved the world...
 - Predestined us to be sons and daughters in love
 - Died for us while we were yet sinners – the cross
 - Rom 8 – nothing can separate us from His love because of the nature of love, of God Himself
- We are His image and intended to reflect this 'spectrum' of who God is – to love the way He loves and to love the things that He loves
- God is present:
 - **In** love – in a loving way – perfectly, powerfully, permanently, in purity (righteous and holy)
 - **With** those He loves – comes to them
 - **To** those He loves – known by them
 - **For** those He loves – blesses them
- His love is:
 - Perfect
 - Pure
 - Powerful
 - Permanent
- God has never withdrawn that love. He never withholds that love. That is not the nature of love.
- Sin separates us from:
 - Loving fellowship with God
 - The source of authentic and lasting joy
 - True peace
 - The full blessing of God. There is still a measure of blessing in the world – even for the unrighteous
- The rest of God is in the centre of His love
 - Love sent Jesus – this was God's redemptive plan from the beginning
 - Love went to the cross – wrath has been poured out on sin when Jesus took all our sin upon Himself and died
 - Love alone saves us – none of our works can. All that is necessary to save us was accomplished on the cross.