

**The Greatest Gift of All**  
**Series: E-100—1 Corinthians 13**  
February 14, 2016    Pastor Bill Bump

Greek words used to describe love:

-eros: sensual love, a passionate attraction, a physical love

-phileo: affection, brotherly love, friendship

-agape: defines God's love, unconditional love, a commitment to act for the highest good of the other person (whether that person deserves it or not)

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul deals with aspects of agape love:

1. The preeminence of love over everything else
2. The practice of this type of love
3. The permanence of this type of love

1. The preeminence of love: Loveless good deeds amount to nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NLT) <sup>1</sup>If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. <sup>3</sup>If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

Verse 1 speaks of eloquent communication, which Paul says is nothing without love.

Verse 2 tells us that knowledge and power are nothing without love.

Verse 3 talks about sacrifice, even to the point of martyrdom, being nothing without love.

2. The practice of love: how love behaves

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT) <sup>4</sup>Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud <sup>5</sup>or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. <sup>6</sup>It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. <sup>7</sup>Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Love will absolutely transform human relationships.

Verse 4 summarizes how unselfish love is.

Verses 5 and 6 summarize the behavior of love.

Verse 7 summarizes how optimistic love is.

This type of love is beyond our human reach. It is absolutely impossible unless the Spirit of God dwells within us and empowers us.

### 3. The permanence of love

1 Corinthians 8-13 (NLT) <sup>8</sup>Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear. <sup>9</sup>Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! <sup>10</sup>But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

<sup>11</sup>It's like this: When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. <sup>12</sup>Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

<sup>13</sup>There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Love never fails or ceases to exist, in the sense that it functions both now and in eternity.

The more you use love, the more there is.

A mark of our maturity is the ability to love this way.

It is more important for us to learn to live out this love than to have any of the spiritual gifts.

### Conclusion

We are to set our hearts on agape love—make it our chief goal, pursue it.

1 Corinthians 14:1a (NLT) Let love be your highest goal...