

The Anatomy of Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 | Mark Foreman | May 12, 2024

◆ The Context of Love – There Is Always a Person and Situation (12:31; 14:1)

- > The context is spiritual gifts and how they operate in a house church setting. Diversity in unity. The Trinity is the supreme example.
- > eagerly desire- we are to excitedly want the gifts, not for ourselves but for how we can help others. The gifts and fruit are always for others.
- > greater gifts- the greater gifts are those that aren't selfish but build up others. They are greater because they do more good for others.
- > the most excellent way- here is the way of love. This is not instead of the gifts but how the gifts and our lives are to function.

◆ The Necessity of Love – Spirituality Without Love Is False (13:1-3)

- > Even if...All these examples are extreme to illustrate the necessity of love.
- > Even if I speak in angelic tongues but have no love, it is just an irritating noise.
- > Even if I know all divine mysteries but have no love it is nothing.
- > Even if I have faith to do dramatic miracles but have no love amounts to nothing.
- > Even if I exercise extreme self-sacrifice but have no love it achieves nothing.

◆ The Nature of Love – Love In Action (13:4-8a)

- > There are many things to say about love (Ex 34:6-7; Jer 31:3; John 3:16; 14:15; 1 Jn. 4:7). Paul has something particular in mind—the faithfulness of love.
 - Love and faithfulness are essentially the same concept in the OT (Exo 34:5; Psa 40:10; Prov 3:4). Some 60x together as synonyms.
 - Faithfulness (*emeth*) is truth applied to relationships. If a person is faithful they are called "true blue," reliable, consistent to a commitment. Love (*chesed*) means covenant or committed love. It is love that is faithful to a commitment.
 - John 1:14: We have seen his glory . . . full of grace and truth.
- > Fifteen verbs are used to lyrically describe love.
 - Two positive expressions: *patient and kind*.
 - Eight verbs telling us what love is not: *envy, boast, proud, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, remembers wrongs, happy about evil*.
 - Four last verbs couple with "always": *protects, trusts, hopes, endures*.
 - The last reveals Paul's emphasis—*never!*
- > Love (agape) is:
 - The first two are love's basic response to painful and difficult world. They are two sides of the same coin, seen in God's response to us.
 - **Patient** (*macrothumei*) - longsuffering. It holds out a long time, never gives in. This and the last statement of Paul shows his hand & emphasis. This is the defense.
 - **Kind** (*chresteuetai*) - to be useful, kind, gracious, serving others. The offense.
 - **Not envy** (*zeloi*) - a negative, possessive zeal toward others (jealousy or envy).
 - **Not boast** (*perperuetai*) - lit. "is not a windbag." It is a not-so- subtle way of advertising itself. Love doesn't promote itself.

- **Not proud** (*physioutiai*) – Middle voice lit. “to puff oneself up, like a billows.” Self-importance and only one’s own perspective resists love. Paul has described the Corinthians with this very verb (4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1).
- **Not rude** (*aschemonei*) – not inappropriate but tactful. Not indecent or dishonorable or shameful in behavior (1 Cor 7:36). Unkind.
- **Not self-seeking** (*zetei ta heautes*) – codependency does this for its own happiness and peace. Love does this sacrificing for the other’s best (10:24, 33).
- **Not easily angered** (*paroxunetai*) – (passive voice) to be irritated, touchy, become indignant. Selfishness promotes irritability. Forbearing. Exasperation is always a sign of defeat (Barclay).
- **Keeps no record of wrongs** (*logizetai to kakon*) accounting term: to credit or apply to one’s account for future payment, i.e. revenge. It doesn’t register. No storing up. No resentment. Doesn’t think about it. (2 Cor 5:19; Luk 23:34).
- **Not rejoice in unrighteousness** (*chairei epi te adikia*) - “not being glad when others go wrong” (Moffatt).
- **But rejoices with the truth** (*sungchirei de te aletheia*) - The rejoicing is with others about the truth, not with the truth. The reverse of the preceding character.
- **Always 4x** (*panta*) - is the opposite of failing or stopping. This crescendo builds to the final declaration of the enduring nature of love.
- **Protects** (*stegei*) – either to cover (as a roof), or to support. To protect or to bear and put up with.
- **Trusts** (*pisteuei*) –Not mean it naively believes for the best but that it never ceases to have faith in Christ and His never-ceasing love for us.
- **Hopes** (*elpizei*) - love hopes that the motives of the actions are pure.
- **Perseveres** (*hupomenei*) – to endure, bear up patiently. Has an indefatigable capacity to endure despite ingratitude, bad conduct and problems, doing it without complaining or discouragement.
- **Never fails** – fall or fail (Rom 8:38-39).

◆ The Lasting Power of Love—Nothing Endures Like Love (13:8b-12)

- > The gifts are transitory in nature, but not love.
- > What we do in this life is always imperfect and incomplete.
- > The “perfection” spoken of here is the coming of Christ and the restoration of all things. It is not the Bible, which some have used to argue against spiritual gifts.
- > But one day incomplete gifts will be gone because we will be fully transformed.
- > Love lasts with the other virtues (faith and hope) but it is the greatest.
- > Faith and hope sustain us while we await Christ’s return.
- > Love however, will be the substance of our eternal existence. God is love.

◆ Thinking It Through

- > Love always has a context: a situation, a face, a challenge. What is yours?
- > What does American Christianity broadcast to the world as being the most important part of our spirituality. If it is not love, why?
- > Sort through the verbs used to describe love. Which ones are you lacking in?
- > Ministry to others and how we relate is to be guided by God’s love for us. How can your gift(s) be more guided by love?
- > If you were to change and become a more loving person, what would be required? What is keeping you back? Who would benefit?
- > Pray to the God of love to specifically change your life in this area.