

## Deuteronomy 6:1-9

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, <sup>2</sup> so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. <sup>3</sup> Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

## 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

<sup>31</sup> Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

**13** If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

## The Way of Love (Deuteronomy 6:1-9 & 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13)

07-June-20

It would be **great** to have your **Bibles open** at **1 Cor chapter 13**

Let me ask God to give us understanding of His Word; **Let's pray...**

### Context/Most Excellent Way (1 Cor 12:31)

Before we begin then

Let's **remind** ourselves of the **context**:

- The **Apostle Paul** is **writing** to a bunch of **Christians** in the Greek church of **Corinth**
- In **chapter 12** - he **spoke** of **spiritual gifts**

### [PowerPoint 1-Context]

- **Spiritual gifts** are for the **common good** of all (1 Cor 12:7)
- **God (thru His Holy Spirit)** distributes **spiritual gifts** as He determines (1 Cor 12:11)
- All the **spiritual gifts** of the people in the **church family** are like a body - in fact the **body of Christ** (1 Cor 12:12) - **one body** with **many parts**
- Each of **us** is **part** of the **body** of Christ - and we all have a **different purpose** - and the **gifts work together** (1 Cor 12:27)
- **Each body part** is **necessary** and **important** - and no body part is better than another - we **need each other**
- Unfortunately, **some** of the **Christians** in **Corinth** **thought** they had **better gifts** than others in the church - they **thought** they were **super spiritual** - and they **looked down** on **others**.

- This was **causing disunity** in the church
- That's why Paul's writing this letter - to stop disunity and disharmony in the church
- Now in this **chapter 13** - Paul says **when** it comes to **using** these **spiritual gifts** - **there is a most excellent way**
- See v31 of chapter 12

Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

[PowerPoint 2- excellent way]

What is this most excellent way?

Simply it is **LOVE!**

### Love Defined

What is love?

[PowerPoint 3-Love Defined]

It's **hard** to **define**.

A dictionary definition is: **an intense feeling of deep affection**

But that's **not a very good definition**.

Especially since in English - we **often misuse** the word

We say - "we love our husband or wife" - and then say "we love roast dinners"

Surely the word love in both those statements is not the same?

In **Greek** - the language of **New Testament [NT]**

There are **several words for love**:

*There's **Eros** = where we get the word **erotic** from = **sexual** pleasure*

***Philia** = a deep **friendship, brotherly** or **sisterly** love (Philadelphia means brotherly love)*

***Storge** = **family** love – the bond between mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters and brothers*

***Agape** = unconditional, sacrificial love – not necessarily expecting anything in return'*

**Agape** is the love word **used** in **1 Corinthians 13** - it's God's love

The love word, **Agape**, is used in many places in the NT

Here's some **examples**:

**John 3:16** - For God so loved [**verb: agapeo**] the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

**1 John 4:7** - Dear friends, let us love [**verb: agapeo**] one another, for love [**noun: agape**] comes from God. Everyone who loves [**verb: agapeo**] has been born of God and knows God.

**1 John 4:9** - This is how God showed his love [**noun: agape**] among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

In chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians - **Agape love is described**

And I want to make 3 points about **agape love** this morning

## Love is Indispensable (1 Cor 13:1-3)

1st point is "agape love is indispensable" - that's in verses 1 to 3

[PowerPoint 4 -indispensable]

Paul tackles the **problem** in **Corinth** where some **people thought** they were **super spiritual** and **better than everyone else**.

Paul says in v1 - even if he had the **gift to speak** some obscure foreign language **or speak** the language of angels in Heaven - it **doesn't mean anything if** there's **no love shown** with that gift

The **noise he would make with** that language would be like **resounding gong** or **clanging cymbal** - it just sounds like a **rusty old gate creaking**

Paul's point in v2 & v3 is - whether a **person has** the **gift of prophecy** to speak God's word really plainly **or** has **super wisdom** that can **explain any mystery** clearly **or** has **super faith** that can **move a mountain** **or** if a **person gives** everything **to the poor** - or if a **person is like a martyr** - the **person with these gifts is nothing** - if there's **no love shown** with it.

Here's **some illustrations** to make the point:

Suppose someone says - "you can't speak other tongues like me - when you can you'll be a proper Christian, like me"

Or they say "When you can preach like me - or can explain the Bible like me - come back - and we can have a decent conversation"

Or they say "If only you had more faith, you could achieve so much more, you really are quite weak in your faith"

Or they say to a homeless person "here's some food and money - don't ask for anymore - stop being a bludger and go and get a job"

Or they say "I make so many sacrifices for this church, I never see you do anything for the church"

I hope you can see none of these **statements** are using **spiritual gifts** with **love!**

They are more about the **person** being **proud** than being **loving**.

You see there's a **spiritual mathematical equation** - that goes like this

5 minus 1 = Nothing

That's - 5 **spiritual gifts** minus **love** = **nothing**

**Love** is the **essential ingredient** when using our gifts

**Love** is indispensable

Application:

When it comes to **using** the **spiritual gifts** that **God** has **blessed us with** - are we using them with love? If not, **what** do we need to **change** - to show love?

Love is other person focused (1 Cor 13:4-7)

The **second point** is "**love is other person focused**" - that's in **verses 4 to 7**

[PowerPoint 5 - other person]

**Paul describes** the **characteristics** of **love** in **verses 4 to 7**

These verses are often used at weddings to talk about love in a marriage

But the context here is - how we show love when using our spiritual gifts.

In general terms, though, these verses - do give us a clear picture of love

- Love is patient: - the King James version says long suffering (it literally means not to lose heart) -- so even when someone might be annoying or hurtful - we continue to show patience and love them and forgive them and don't look for revenge or look to get even - remember Jesus said "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34) and Peter says "Love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8)
- Love is kind: - kindness - means saying nice things, doing nice things - being considerate to the other person. Think about the way Jesus dealt with the woman caught in adultery - He didn't condone what she did - but he was kind to her (John 8:1-11)
- Love is not envious: -we shouldn't want what the other person has - like we're in some sort of competition - we should be pleased that they have what they have - after all we're meant to share our gifts & possessions with one another
- Love does not boast: - we shouldn't be bragging about how good we are - that does two things - a) it annoys the heck out of the other person - and b) it makes the other person feel inferior and even hurt
- Love is not proud: - it literally means puffed up - big headed - arrogant - looking down on someone. Love without pride means we should not think any job is beneath us. It's okay for a husband to sweep the floor and wash the dishes and hang the washing out.

- Love does not **dishonour**: -it literally means **being rude** - showing **no manners** - it means **forgetting pleases and thank yous** - it means **showing no respect** - just **riding over someone else's boundaries**. Our love should never be like that.
- Love is not **self-seeking**: - our love should not be **seeking** what's **best for me** - but **seeking** what's **best for the other person**. Pleasing and caring for the **other person first**. Usually, **they can't help** but respond in the same way anyway.
- Love is not **easily angered**: - it means we don't **blow** our **top** over the **slightest thing**. We don't **raise** our **voice**, **yell** and **scream**. That **scares** the **other person** and **breaks down trust**, and they won't want to talk about **anything deep in the future** in case things blow up again.  
Sometimes it's **okay to be angry** about something - but **in our anger** we **shouldn't sin** (Ephesians 4:26). Rudyard Kipling said "*it is the mark of a man if he can keep his head when everyone around him is losing theirs and blaming it on hm; and if the man is hated but doesn't give way to hating back*"
- Love does not **keep record** of **wrongs**: [the **Greek literally** means keeping a **record in a ledger**]  
If we do **have a disagreement** about something - we don't **bring up** the **last 5 years of arguments** - and say "*remember when you did this and this and this*" - or say things like "**you ALWAYS DO this!**" - saying things like that just **inflame the problem**. Much better to **forgive past wrongs** and **put them behind our back**.

- Love does not **delight** in **evil**: - we should not **answer wrong with more wrong** - **retaliating & getting even** never works. **Two wrongs don't make a right** - e.g. look what's happening in USA right now.
- Love **rejoices** in the **truth**: - the **secret** of a **loving relationship** is to **always tell the truth**. **Lies** always **lead to more lies and deceit** and **cover ups**.
- Love **always protects**: - it literally means **putting a covering over someone so they can endure anything** - so in this sense it means **love can bear any insult, any injury and any disappointment**. So, in our loving we would **want to protect someone from insult, injury and disappointment**.
- Love **always trusts**: - in terms of our relationship with God it means **believing every promise God makes** - and in terms of our relationships with others it means - **trusting someone completely with our life-** and saying **I trust that you will always have the best intentions for me**
- Love **always hopes**: - this means always **looking for better days ahead** -
- Love **always perseveres**: - this means **enduring to the end** and never giving up. As marriage vows say (and this can be friendships too) - *for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health,*

Notice with **each** one of these **love characteristics** - they are **focused on the person being loved** and not on ourselves - **love is other person centered**

Notice too - these **love characteristics** - are a **picture of God's love** for us.

And they are a **picture of the love Jesus showed in His life and death**.

Application: which of these love characteristics do you find easy? Which do you find difficult?

If you're game - ask someone close to you - to tell you which one's you struggle with?

What will you do about the love characteristics you find difficult?

Repent and pray and ask for God's help?

### Love is everlasting (1 Cor 13:8-13)

The third point is "agape love is everlasting" - that's in verses 8 to 13

[PowerPoint 6-Everlasting]

See v8 - Paul says love never fails

How can Paul say that - when we see so many loving friendships break down - when we see so many marriages end in divorce?

It sure doesn't seem like love never fails.

Well - that's because those relationships haven't applied the agape love that Paul's described here.

Remember agape love is God's way of loving - it's other person focused - it loves sacrificially like God loved us by sending His son - and it's a "to die for" love - like the love Jesus showed on the cross.

That's what Paul means here - God's type of love - agape love - never fails

We just sometimes fail to love like that!

God's agape love is everlasting.

Whereas Paul says - still in v8 - **spiritual gifts** - and he lists a few **examples** - like **prophecy**, speaking in **tongues** and **knowledge** - spiritual gifts will all pass away?

Why will they pass away?

Because **once** we're in **Heaven** with the **Lord** - we don't need those gifts.

Paul explains what our time on **Earth** is like with **2 examples** - in v11-12

1<sup>st</sup> **example** is a **child** (v11) - when we were **children** we obviously **acted** and **thought** like a **child** - but when we **grew up** and became an **adult** - we stopped **acting like a child** [not sure if that's happened to me yet - ha ha]

Paul's point is our **knowledge of God** whilst on this **earth** is **childlike** in comparison to what we'll know and see - when we meet Him face to face

2<sup>nd</sup> **example** is a **mirror** (v12) - **Corinth** was famous for its **manufacture of mirrors**. But our **modern mirror** as we know it - gives pretty much a **perfect reflection** [since 13<sup>th</sup> century] but mirrors in **Corinth** were **made from highly polished metal** and at best **gave an imperfect reflection**.

Paul's point is that in **this life** we only see **imperfect reflections of God** and are **left with mysteries** and **unanswered questions**.

Paul's point is - this **way of agape love** will lead us in the end to come **face to face** with the **Lord** - when we'll have **all those mysteries and questions answered** and we'll see the **complete picture**.

When will this happen?

**When Jesus returns or when a believer in Jesus dies and goes to Heaven - whichever comes first**

The bottom line - Paul says - in V13 - is that

**Faith, hope and love remain but the greatest is love**

**Why is love the greatest?**

**Because God is love and God is everlasting.**

**And it's God's love for us - that produces a rock-solid faith and gives us a certain hope of Heaven and eternity with Jesus**

**Application:**

**In our use of spiritual gifts - are we showing agape love?**

**In our relationships with others - are we showing agape love?**

**When we look around our world and our community**

**We see many people operating with conditional love**

**They'll love as long as no one lets them down - then they're off.**

**They'll love as long as there's something in it for them - if not there out of there.**

**We see people who are victims of being loved like that - and they are wounded and battered and bruised - from this incomplete love.**

**Because it's not agape love.**

Our job as **Christians** is to **correct** this conditional **love** that **people** are **swimming in** and **love them** with **Jesus' agape** love.

It's **easy to love** someone who is **loveable** -

What about the **unloved**? Who's going to **show** them the **most excellent way**?

What about the **unlovable**? Who's going to **love them**, if we don't?

### Conclusion

To finish up then

The **most excellent way of love** - is **shown** magnificently in the **Cross of Jesus**.

If we had a **Bible picture dictionary** and looked up **love**

[PowerPoint 7-Picture]

We'd **see a picture** of **Jesus dying** on the **Cross**

It's **unconditional sacrificial agape** love

Will people say that about our love?

Let's pray?