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Without Love, We Are Nothing

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-7

Introduction

1. No doubt, all of us have used the words, "I love you," at some point in our lives.
2. We who are married have used them a number of times in our married lives unless we are like the man whose wife asked him why he never told her he loved her, and received the response, "I told you I loved you when we got married. If I change my mind, I will let you know!"
3. The word "love" has been used so much in so many ways in our culture over the last fifty years or so that it has lost much of its meaning.
 - a. We love a specific person or animal.
 - b. We love a new purchase (house, car, furniture, phone, etc.)
 - c. We love a certain culinary delight (Jere Hooper, Mexican chicken casserole).
4. But what is the love that we as Christians are to have for one another and the lost.
5. Why is it so important?
6. Here in 1 Corinthians 13, the apostle Paul answers that question, and also reveals why we are nothing without it.
7. Before we can be more involved with each other in the work of our Lord, we must make sure that we have the kind of love which Christ had.
8. Only this love can truly grow the family of God.

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I. The Priority of Love (vv. 1-3)

A. OVER TONGUES

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal” (v. 1).

1. In Paul’s day, the Christians in Corinth placed a high premium on this gift of the Spirit.
2. They also admired eloquence in their speakers, something they found very little of in Paul (cf. 2:1, 4; 2 Corinthians 10:10).

“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:1)

“and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom . . .” (1 Corinthians 2:4)

“For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.”” (2 Corinthians 10:10)

3. Paul is saying, “I could be the most impressive speaker you have ever heard, but if I speak without love for others, I may grab your attention for the moment, but then the effect is gone.
4. Instead, he says, “I have become a noisy gong or a clanging symbol” (v. 1b).

2a

B. ABOVE PROPHECY

“If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but do not have love, I am nothing” (v. 2a).

1. Prophets knew things which were hidden from others because they received their revelation from God.
2. No prophet had ever had such omniscience that they knew “all mysteries and all knowledge.”
3. Even if a person knows every divine secret, if there is no love, they are nothing.

Slide 3**C. GREATER THAN FAITH**

“If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (v. 2b).

1. Paul described this faith as the ability to “remove mountains.”
2. He was referring to a statement made by Jesus to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him” (Mark 11:23).
3. But even such an ability would amount to nothing without love for others.

3a**D. OVER GREAT PERSONAL SACRIFICE**

1. “If I give all my possessions to feed the poor . . . but do not have love, it profits me nothing” (v. 3a)
 - a. Many of you may remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked Him, what he should do to inherit eternal life.
 - b. Jesus reminded him of a number of the commandments which he said he had kept from his youth up (Mark 10:20).
 - c. Jesus then told him, “go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Mark 10:21).
 - d. Paul said that even if we do this, but do it without love, it profits us nothing.
2. “If I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing” (v. 3b)
 - a. You may also remember what happened to Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-nego who refused to bow down in worship before the golden image of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:18).

- b. He became so angry with them that he had them tied up and thrown into a “furnace of blazing fire” (Daniel 3:23).
 - c. God spared those men, so that they were unhurt by the fire.
 - d. Others down through the ages have died in the flames set by those who hated the cause for which they stood.
 - e. Again, Paul said that if you or I should encounter that same fate, but do so without love, we gain nothing.
3. At the end of this letter, Paul said, “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:14).
 4. You and I may involve ourselves in many great works for the cause of Christ, but if we do so without love for Christ and for those we serve, it will all be for nothing.

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II. What Does Such Love Look Like

A. WHAT LOVE IS

1. “Love is patient” (v. 4a)
 - a. When you consider the fruit of the Spirit which Paul lists in Galatians 5:22-23, the list begins with “love,” and includes “patience” and “kindness.”
 - b. Paul says here that “patience” and “kindness” are two characteristics which are to be found in love.
 - c. The KJV translates this as “charity suffereth long.”
 - d. Patience is our ability to be wronged and yet not retaliate.
2. “Love is kind” (v. 4b).
 - a. We see God’s kindness in His many expressions of mercy toward us.
 - b. A kind person gives to a person what they need instead of what they

deserve.

- c. Jesus was kind to the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery:
 - 1) The Jews who brought her to Jesus wanted to stone her because she had violated the law.
 - 2) Jesus, however, said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:8, ESV).
 - 3) When they all left He said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more” (John 8:11, ESV).
- d. If we are to love those of our church family and those in our community, we must be people who are kind.

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B. WHAT LOVE IS NOT AND DOES NOT DO

- 1. “Love is not jealous” (v. 4c).
 - a. It is not envious of others.
 - b. There are two types of envy or jealousy:
 - 1) One covets what others have (i.e., possessions, position, relationships).
 - 2) The other begrudges the fact that others have what it wants.
 - a) It isn’t so much that it wants those things for itself.
 - b) Instead, wishes that others did not have those things.
 - c. Paul, however, said that we are to “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15).
 - d. Love which is not jealous, asks the question, “How best can I serve those for whom Christ died?”
- 2. “Love does not brag” (v. 4d)
 - a. It is not boastful.

- b. Such people enjoy drawing attention to themselves and their accomplishments.
- c. The truth is that we cannot “brag” and love at the same time.
 - 1) Bragging involves exalting ourselves over others as if our accomplishments were through our own merit and ability.
 - 2) Love is concerned only for the good of the community as a whole.
- 3. “Love . . . is not arrogant” (v. 4e).
 - a. It is not “proud” (NIV84) or “conceited” (HCSB).
 - b. It is not “puffed up” (KJV).
 - c. The opposite of pride and arrogance is humility.
 - d. Solomon said that “a man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor” (Proverbs 29:23).
 - e. Peter said that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5).
 - f. Jesus is our perfect example of humility: “He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

He left the splendor of heaven,	If that isn't love the ocean is dry,
Knowing His destiny	There're no stars in the sky
Was the lonely hill of Golgotha,	And the sparrow can't fly!
There to lay down His life for me.	

- 4. “Love does not act unbecomingly” (v. 5a).
 - a. It does not “behave rudely” (NKJV) or “act improperly” (HCSB).
 - b. When we love as Christ loved, we care too much for those around us to behave in such shameful ways.
 - c. We must never forget such things as courtesy, tact and politeness.

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5. "Love . . . does not seek its own" (v. 5b).
 - a. "It does not insist on its own way" (ESV).
 - b. It seems there are two kinds of people in the world today:
 - 1) Those who always insist upon their privileges and those who always remember their responsibilities.
 - 2) Those who are always thinking about what life owes them and those who never forget what they owe to life.
 - c. A lot of our problems could be solved in our modern world if more people would think less about their rights and more about their duties.
 - d. This is what Paul meant when he said, in Philippians 2:4, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
6. "Love . . . is not provoked" (v. 5c).
 - a. "It is not irritable" (ESV) or "easily angered" (NIV84).
 - b. The poet Rudyard Kipling once wrote that the test of a man was . . .
 - 1) "You can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you"
 - 2) You can be hated, but you "don't give way to hating"
 - c. This describes our Lord, who as Peter said in 1 Peter 2:23, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."
7. "Love does not take into account a wrong suffered" (v. 5d).
 - a. It is not "resentful" (ESV).
 - b. "It keeps no record of wrongs" (NIV84, HCSB).
 - c. There are many people who brood over their wrongs until it is impossible to forget them.
 - d. Christians love, however, has learned the lesson of forgetting.

8. “Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness (wrongdoing), but rejoices with the truth” (v. 6).
 - a. The love we are to have finds no pleasure in anything that is wrong.
 - b. The love of Christ which is to dwell within us rejoices in all behavior which reflects the gospel — every victory gained, every forgiveness offered, every act of kindness.
 - c. Such love looks for mercy and justice for all, including those with whom we disagree.

Slide 7**C. TO SUM IT UP, LOVE . . .**

1. “Bears all things” (v. 7a).
 - a. Any insult, any injury, any disappointment.
 - b. This was the kind of love that was in the heart of Jesus.
2. “Believes all things” (v. 7b).
 - a. When it comes to God, we always take Him at His word.
 - b. When it comes to our fellow man, we always believe the best about other people.
3. “Hopes all things” (v. 7c).
 - a. Hope helps us believe that even though a person may be failing now, good may eventually come.
 - b. It is the optimism which hope provides that keeps us moving forward.
 - c. Our hope is not in ourselves, but in Christ.
 - d. When a brother or sister falls, it is Christ who picks them up and makes them stand (Romans 14:4).
4. “Endures all things” (v. 7d).
 - a. Trials, tribulation, disappointments, heartaches, betrayals, etc.
 - b. In Matthew 21:13, Jesus said, “But the one who endures to the end, he will be

saved.”

- c. Paul told Timothy, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him” (1 Timothy 2:12).
- d. So, don’t give up and don’t give in.

Conclusion

1. There is a hymn which we have sung on occasion in which those singing bass repeat these last four traits throughout the hymn.

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2. The title to that hymn is "*The Greatest Commands*" and the first stanza utilizes the words from 1 John 4:7,8:

Love one another, for love is of God.

He who loves is born of God;

And knows God.

He who does not love, does not know God,

For God is love, God is love, God is love.

3. The reason that Paul says that we are nothing if we do not love is because, “The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).
4. Does the love of God dwell within you? If not, won’t you do something about that today?