

Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls (Prov 25:28).

Thanks to thoughts from Wayne Greeson and Ken Weliever, my sermon yesterday was "Seven Things You Need to Stop Doing Right Now!": (1) Stop complaining. Do all things without complaining (Phil 2:14-15). (2) Stop talking more than you listen. Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19). (3) Stop tying your identity to the things you own. One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15-21). (4) Stop comparing yourself to others. It is not wise to compare yourself to others (John 21:18-22). (5) Stop suffering imagined troubles. Do not worry about tomorrow (Matt 6:31-34). (6) Stop judging other people. Judge not, that you be not judged (Matt 7:1-5). (7) Stop over indulging yourself in food. Eat only as much as you need (Prov 25:16). I discipline my body and bring it into subjection (1 Cor 9:27).

By; Keith Crews

Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Classes / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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The Greatest of These (1 Corinthians 13)

When Jesus was asked the question, "What is the great commandment?" His response was to love God and one's neighbor as one's self. Thus, it is not surprising that the inspired apostle Paul penned in 1 Corinthians 13.13, "Now abide faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Poems have been penned, songs sung, lectures delivered, sermons preached and articles written on this grand and glorious theme of love. Yet, the cumulative effort of all these has not scratched the surface of the breadth, height, and depth of love. So, our little effort will only amount to a drop of water in the vast ocean of love.

The Comparison

The Corinthians were ignorant regarding spiritual gifts. They had allowed their pride to possess them. Some were puffed up because of a gift they possessed, while others were jealous. Paul sought to dispel this disposition by teaching the importance of every member of the body. He closed chapter twelve by saying, "covet earnestly the best gifts and I show you a more excellent way."

Paul compared love to the gifts of languages and prophecy, emphasizing the superiority of love. He also compared love to miraculous faith and good works, yet said these were of little value without love. Feel the passion with which he speaks as he says, "Though I speak... though I have... though I bestow... and though I give... and have not love, it profits me nothing." ...

In other words, as James Russell Lowell said, “The gift without the giver is bare.” It is possible to give without loving, but we cannot love without giving.

Therefore, all of our good deeds, all of our sacrifices, all of the hours spent in Bible study, teaching classes, attending services, sharing the gospel with others, all of the time, toil, and dedication is for nothing, *if it is done* with the wrong motive, without the spirit of love.

“The love of which I speak is slow to lose patience — it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; It can outlast anything. It is in fact the one thing, that still stands when all else has fallen” (1 Corinthians 13.4-8, *The New Testament in Modern English*).

The word “love” in this text is the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* is not the romantic love, friendship or affection, but the unconditional love of the will. *Agape* is the love God has for men, even sinners for whom Christ died. *Agape* is the love that causes men to treat their enemies with respect and dignity. *Agape* appreciates the value of something or someone. *Agape* expresses itself in good will toward others. *Agape* is the constructive power of life that beautifies the thoughts, tempers the words, molds the motives, and inspires the deeds of the person guided by its unfailing force.

The fifteen divine characteristics of love named by Paul are not lofty ideals to be admired, but practical ideas to be applied in our homes, communities and churches. Consider these applications.

Love’s patience is shown by the stronger brother who works with the weak one to overcome some problem in his life, instead of being quick to condemn. Kindness is constantly heard in the words of praise and encouragement by one sister to another, not in caustic, sharp-tongued criticism.

Love rejoices in the business success of his friend, without any hint of the evil of envy.

In the home, love has good manners. It is not rude or crude. It says, “please” and “thank you” and “excuse me.” Love is not easily angered when one of its children disappoints or disobeys them, but with a calm composure love corrects and chastises the child. Love is the wife who is able to forgive her husband of some indiscretion and never bring it up again; love is a husband who refuses to grow bitter over his wife’s past negligence; and, love is a parent who can give his child a fresh start without reminding him of past mistakes. Why? Because “love keeps no record of wrongs.”

The Conquest

Today’s chaotic conditions have brought trouble to millions of homes, schools, and churches whose foundations are crumbling. But the apostle emphasizes the victory of love, not only to overcome life’s challenges, but to last in the life to come. Love is eternal because God is love, and God is eternal. When faith shall become sight, and hope shall be obtained, love will stand!

Truly, what the world, the home and the church needs today is love — God’s *agape* love. As Frank B. Tebbetts once wrote, “A life without love in it is like a heap of ashes upon a deserted hearth — with the fire dead, the laughter stilled, and the light extinguished. It is like a winter landscape — with the flowers frozen, and the wind whispering through the withered leaves.”

Written by; Ken Weliever

Taken from; Christianity Magazine, January 1990