

REAL LOVE

TEXTS: John 13:34, 35; I Corinthians 13

INTRODUCTION: Illustration: His lifetime batting average was .367. He had 4,191 hits and only 357 strikeouts in 11,429 times at bat. He stole a base 892 times. Ty Cobb has a well-deserved place in professional baseball's Hall of Fame. He was also one of the angriest men the sports world ever saw. He once attacked a disabled fan who had taunted him. He launched an attack on a groundskeeper and his wife just because they had tried to shake his hand. It seems that the rage that accompanied Ty Cobb throughout his career had its roots in a broken relationship with his father. Ty Cobb's father never approved of Cobb's pursuit of athletics. When he left home to pursue a professional baseball career, his father's only comment was, "Don't come home a failure." One of the greatest sorrows of Ty Cobb's life was that his father never saw him become a success. He was killed by Ty Cobb's mother. Years later, Ty Cobb would say, "I've never gotten over it."

Somebody has said, "Love makes the world go around." To which somebody else commented, "Well, whether it does or not, it sure makes the trip worthwhile!"

Everybody needs to be loved and appreciated! A lack of love can have serious effects on our life and on our relationships with others.

Illustration: Thomas Carlyle, the brilliant Scottish writer, lived on an isolated farm in Dumfriesshire, which he called "the loneliest nook in Britain". Each day he climbed a ladder to his attic, where he worked until dusk. His devoted wife, June, was left all alone. One evening at dinner, June asked why he had never expressed appreciation for the food she had lovingly prepared for him. "Woman," Carlyle barked, "must you be paid for everything you do?" With that, he stamped off to his attic workshop. Years later, when his wife died, Thomas Carlyle found her diary. On tear-stained pages, he read this recurring refrain, "Oh, I wish you would say a kind word or give me a compliment now and then about the things I try to do to make you happy."

How would you like to live in a loveless world? It is sad but we are fast approaching that kind of world today. Do you remember what the Bible prophesied would happen in the last days? In Matthew 24:12 it says, "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*" That word "*iniquity*" means "lawlessness". Because iniquity or lawlessness shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. We sure see that in today's society do we not?

Paul's tribute to love falls into three natural divisions:

1. The Excellence of Love
2. The Exercise of Love
3. The Endurance of Love

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF LOVE (I Corinthians 13:1-3)

A. Love is better than eloquence of speech! (vs.1)

1. The world has heard enough loveless sermons from the pulpit and in people's lives, would you agree?
2. In some portions of Christendom today, there is great emphasis on what we call speaking in tongues.
 - a. There was such a biblical gift we know.
 - b. If God wanted to give that gift today, He is sovereign, He could do that.
 - c. However, I believe what we call tongues today is not the Biblical gift.
 1. The tongues talked about in the Bible were actual known languages (see Acts 2:1-11).
 2. There is a Satanic counterfeit making its rounds today.
 - (a) Modern tongues speaking does not meet the Biblical criteria in I Corinthians 14.
 - (b) Speaking in tongues is not a sign that you are filled with the Holy Spirit or love.
 - (c) The sign that you are filled with the Holy Spirit and with love is not that you can speak with many tongues but that you can control the one tongue you have (Notice James 1:26)!

B. Love is better than the exercise of spiritual gifts! (vs. 2)

1. Love excels prophesy! (vs. 2a)
 - a. What is prophesy? In the New Testament period it was to foretell.
 - b. Today, since the canon of scripture is complete with the 66 books of the Bible, it is to tell forth the Word of God!
 - c. Prophesy is the ability to speak theological truth in such a concise and forthright way that it moves and compels and exhorts people. It edifies and encourages them.
 - d. Suppose a man has the gift of prophesy and he does not have love. Suppose he can split a theological hair into 16 equal parts. Suppose that he has heaven on his tongue and hell in his heart. "What good is it?", says Paul.
2. Love excels knowledge! (vs. 2b)
 - a. What Paul is saying is that a right heart is more important than a bright head.
 - b. Someone has rightly said, "People will not care about how much we know until they know how much we care."
3. Love excels faith! (vs. 2c)
 - a. Faith is wonderful! Without faith you cannot be saved (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Without faith you cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). We are to walk by faith (II Corinthians 5:7).
 - b. What Paul is saying is that if you have enough faith to move mountains and yet you cannot move the malice from your heart, what good is it?

C. Love is better than the expression of extreme generosity. (vs. 3)

1. Love excels charity!

- a. Suppose you gave half your goods or wealth to the church; suppose you gave the rest to the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and so on.
 - b. If you did all that and didn't have love, what good would it do?
 - c. You can give without loving but you cannot love without giving!
2. Love excels martyrdom!
- a. You say do loveless people become martyrs? Yes, they do!
 - b. There are some people so filled with hate that for them to die so that they can kill someone else is a great honor for them (or so they think).

II. THE EXERCISE OF LOVE (I Corinthians 13:4-7)

A. Love is patient! (vs. 4a, 7)

1. The word "patient" means "long-tempered".
2. The word "bear" means "to roof over something with silence".
3. God is telling us that it is a great Christian virtue to be slow to lose our temper and to be silent in the face of criticism.

B. Love is kind! (vs. 4b)

1. Ephesians 4:32
2. A little girl was heard to pray one night, "Lord, make all the bad people good and all the good people nice."

C. Love is not envious! (vs. 4c)

1. Do you rejoice in the success of your peers? Do you covet what other people have?
2. Envy is the rottenness of the bones (Proverbs 14:30).

D. Love is not pushy! (vs. 4d)

1. The phrase "*vaunteth not itself*" means to make others jealous.
2. Love also, verse 5 tells us, "*does not seek her own*".

E. Love is not proud! (vs. 4e)

1. Envy carries the idea of not wanting another to have that which you cannot have.
2. Love and pride cannot dwell, cohabitate in the same heart.
3. You can be big headed or big hearted but you cannot be both at the same time.
4. Only one thing causes contentions, arguments—PRIDE! (Proverbs 13:10; Proverbs 26:20-22).
5. There are no problems too big to solve, only people too small to solve them.
6. Jonathan Edwards said, "Nothing sets a man so much out of the devil's reach as humility."

F. Love is courteous! (vs. 5a)

1. The word "*unseemly*" refers to having bad or inappropriate manners.
2. Do you know what courtesy is? That's love in the little things, love that says "please", love that says "thank you", etc.

G. Love is unselfish! (vs. 5b) "...seeketh not her own..."

H. Love is not provoked easily! (vs. 5c)

1. The idea here is that love is not easily aroused to anger.
2. What does it take to upset you and get you to blow up?
3. Illustration: I read that Jonathan Edwards had a beautiful daughter who also possessed a bad disposition. A young man came to court her, asking Edwards' permission. When he refused, the young man said, "I understand. You don't think that I am worthy of her." "No," said Jonathan Edwards, "She is not worthy of you." Edwards understood that a person who is easily aroused to anger would be very difficult to live with (Proverbs 21:19; 25:24).

I. Love is not prone to believe evil! (vs. 5d)

1. This phrase "*thinketh no evil*" is really a bookkeeping term.
2. What it really means is that love does not keep score or store up grudges.
3. When love is in an argument, it does not recite a list of past indiscretions.

J. Love is just! (vs. 6)

1. Love does not want you to gossip.
2. Before you say something or before you listen to something bad about someone, it ought to pass 3 golden tests:
 - a. **Is it true?**
 - b. **Is it kind?**
 - c. **Is it necessary?**

K. Love is positive! (vs. 7a, b)

1. Love "*believeth all things, hopeth all things*".
2. Love is not cynical or suspicious.
3. Love looks for a reason to believe the best.

L. Love is persistent! (vs. 7c)

1. Love "*endureth all things*".
2. I am told that the word "endure" speaks of an army holding a vital position; hanging on to that piece of ground at all costs.
3. Illustration: I once heard a preacher say that Elizabeth Barrett was a poet and Robert Browning was a poet. He said that Browning read Barrett's poetry and became interested in her. He further said that Elizabeth Barrett was bedridden, but that on Browning's first visit, she sat up in bed. On his second visit, she got out of bed and walked. On his third visit, they eloped! What a wonderful story he told about the power of love. Later, I read the biographies of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. I discovered that while they were both poets, and he did indeed read her poetry and became interested in her, and she was in fact bedridden, it was not until after 90 visits that they eloped! I thought, "Well, here's another great story ruined by the facts." However, the Lord showed me that the accurate story was more powerful. Love doesn't simply come 3 times. Love will come 90-sometimes if necessary. Love is persistent.

III. THE ENDURANCE OF LOVE (I Corinthians 13:8-13)

A. Gifts are passing.

B. Love is permanent.

CONCLUSION:

L—listening when another is speaking,

O—overlooking petty faults and forgiving all failures;

V—valuing other people for who they are;

E—expressing love in a practical way.

Are you practicing *LOVE, REAL LOVE*? Remember, everybody needs to be loved and appreciated! Show someone *REAL LOVE* today. Tell someone you *LOVE* them today.

Tell how to be saved. Dear Christian friend, are you doing what you can to *LOVE* your brothers and sisters, friends and relatives, neighbors, co-workers to Jesus Christ?