

## **Love: The More excellent Way**

### **1 Corinthians 13**

Paul has told us to earnestly desire the greater gifts :12:31 And I show still a more excellent way....Love the theme Ch 13

In the mid-west at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, train tracks ran next to wheat fields. The train's engines were powered by on-board coal burning stoves or anything flammable that was fed into the burner. Problem was the engines' smokestacks spilt hot embers into the air & when the wheat or corn was ripe and ready for harvest it became a virtual tinderbox. Farmers often lost their crops & even their farms from raging crop fires set by cinder spewing locomotives. It happened to one farmer as his field caught fire & strong winds swept the flames toward his house & barn. His desperate attempts to save the homestead failed. In the aftermath, as he sifted thru the smoldering rubble, kicking debris, picking up charred remnants, he kicked what looked like a burnt tree stump & as he did, ½ dozen baby chicks scurried out from under the cooked carcass of their dead mother. It seems when the flames drew near, the mother hen gathered her chicks under her body to protect them from the oncoming inferno. As the fire passed over, she instinctively sheltered her offspring, giving her life that her baby chicks might be saved.

If a heroic mother hen inspires us by her sacrifice how much more the heroism of people **Jn 15:13 Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

The ultimate in heroic sacrifice **Jn 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. Rom 5:8 but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

There are those who have displayed love by dying for others, yet it's been said **'It is easier to die as a Christian than to live as one.'** Death is instant, life goes on & on. So to die in a burst of Christian love may be easier than to live a long life of God's agape love toward hard to get along w/ saints.

And yet this is our spiritual vocation. It is what God calls us to **Jn 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** Alternative? Paul Simon "I am a rock"

I am a rock I am an island-I've built walls a fortress deep & mighty that none may penetrate. I have no need of friendship, friendship causes pain, its laughter & it's loving I disdain. I am a rock I am an island. Don't talk of love, I've heard the word before, it's sleeping in my memory-I won't disturb the slumber of feelings that have died, if I never loved I never would have cried, I am a rock I am an island-...hiding in my room safe w/in my womb I touch no one & no one touches me, I am a rock I am an island-And a rock feels no pain & an island never cries.

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*1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*

Eloquence is nothing w/o a tender heart behind the words—it's just irritating noise. Gift w/ words is hollow if no affectionate feelings. Good words-bad attitude.

Prophecy, mysteries, knowledge, faith are given us as means to know God but w/o love they not serving intended purpose. Love covers sins/flaws

Possessions / body burned is ultimate in physical sacrifice but love looks at disposition more than deed. Good deed w/ bad disposition nullifies service.

Paul lists 15 attributes of love—a particular kind of love—Gods agape love

*4 Love is patient, love is kind, & is not jealous; love does not brag & is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*

*Patient*-w/ people not circumstances. I have tremendous patience working on projects **coil springs reposition A-arm '53 Ply wagon**. But patient w/ people when wronged-could but don't retaliate. One who is slower than you, they don't get it but you do-yet you endure & not berate.

*Dutch proverb 'a handful of patience is worth more than a bucket of brains.'*

Susanna Wesley had 17 children, mother of John & Charles (Methodist)— husband 'I marvel at your patients you've told the child the same thing 20 times. Looking fondly at the child 'Had I spoken the matter only 19 times I would have lost all my labor'

***Pr 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who captures a city.***

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David-Shimei “cursing, stones, man of blood, worthless fellow, God is done w/ you-given kingdom to usurper-evil is come back on you”. Abishai-dead dog let me cut off his head. David *“no calm down-he curses me-if God said curse David maybe God will have pity on me & return good instead of cursing*

*Kind*-After patient you're kind--some believers are nice but not very kind-walking on egg shells—shake 'em a little & they explode. *Water & soda – shake—what happens-well what's inside? Peter Marshall 'O God when I am wrong, make me easy to change, & when I am right make me easy to live with!* You can be orthodox in beliefs—dot all i--cross t--yet be unkind.

Phillip II of Spain was a very religious man yet instigated the Spanish Inquisition & believed he was serving God by slaughtering Christians who had a different theology than his own.

There are good Christian people who are not very kind. They've developed a critical spirit toward others. I wonder If transported back to Jesus & there when woman caught in **adultery** thrown at Jesus feet? Who would you side w/ the critics or Jesus? Or **RYR** went away sorrowful would you gossip he unwilling give up possessions for Jesus as you did. Jesus loved him. Mk 10:21

American Association for the Advancement of Science conducted a study on the importance of kindness in day to day relations. 44 doctors were given symptoms of a patient & asked to diagnose the illness. Half the doctors were given a box of candy as a token of appreciation for their involvement in the study. The other doctors received nothing. The real research was toward the doctor's reaction to a kindness done to them. The results according to Cornell University 'doctors given the candy more correctly diagnose the patient's problem—because **'appreciation gave rise to self-sacrifice, helpfulness & improved interpersonal processes'** Kind heart achieve more than cold one

*Not jealous*—Two kinds--one that wants what someone else has. The other (more insidious) Begrudges the good fortune of another & despises them for it. **1 Sam 18:8-9 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul looked at David with suspicion (boil) from that day on. Illus guy wanting car.**

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**Not brag**—puff up-puffer fish-appears bigger than is--there is a sense of lowliness w/ agape love—Seeing less in themselves than what others credit them w/. They are not impressed w/ themselves. **Hudson Taylor** “**I am but little servant of an illustrious God**”.

They more aware of unworthiness than w/ their worth. This kind of person is amazed at the fact that they are truly loved by others. **2 Sam 7:18** ***"Who am I, O Lord GOD, & what is my house, that Thou hast brought me this far?"***

**Not arrogant**—not consider own importance. An inward disposition not outward display. **Napoleon** advocated family values & public worship for the citizenry but of himself he said ***'I am not a man like other men. The laws of morality do not apply to me.'***

William Carey was a humble cobbler, missionary to India and linguist—translating great portions of scriptures into 34 Indian languages. Upon his arrival in India he was regarded w/ great contempt. At a dinner party a foe seeking to humiliate him shouted across the room ‘Mr. Carey, did you not once work as a shoe-maker.’ Carey replied ‘no, only a cobbler’. Not making shoes only repairing them. **Surfboard maker? No just repaired them.**

**Not act unbecomingly**—love doesn’t behave in a graceless manner-Some believers boast in bluntness. They are crass & critical. ***'I can go a long way w/ someone wrong in judgment but right in spirit but I can't go very far w/ someone right in judgment but wrong in spirit'***

Use courtesy, tact, politeness and compassion in your speech. ***'Let your speech always be w/ grace, seasoned as it were w/ salt'***. **Col 4:6** ***'Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word fitly spoken'***. **Pr 25:11** ***DL Moody said a person who truly loves the lost cannot preach on hell unless they do it w/ tears in their eyes.***

**Not seek its own**—not insist upon its own rights & own way but willing to **yield**—two kinds of people; those who claim their privileges & those who remember their responsibilities. **Translated**-Those who think more of their rights than they do of their duties. Those who say **God owes me** and those who say **I owe God**.

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*Not provoked*—KJV 'easily' not there—An absolute statement—Or I can say *I may get provoked but not easily*—excusing my anger. Not becoming angry w/ people & losing temper over every little thing that goes wrong.

***Epic-te-tus Grk Stoic Philosopher 1<sup>st</sup> C Whenever you are angry, be assured that it is not only a present evil, but that you have increased a habit.***

***Pr 16:32 He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.***

*Not account a wrong suffered*—accounting term—where you keep a ledger & not forget wrongs done to you—to get even later. *In certain cultures it is customary to keep reminders of your hatred for your enemy by hanging items around the huts that trigger the memory of the wrongs done to you, thus keeping the hatred stirred up, nursing the anger, keeping it warm.*

Christian love forgives & forgets—***Heb 8:12 For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.***

*Not rejoice in unrighteousness*—has no pleasure in hearing something malicious about someone else. Human nature more attracted to bad news rather than good news—misfortune more than good fortune—Scandal rather than happy ending. Love takes no pleasure in bad reports

*Rejoices w/ the truth*—love hates a cover up, deception & lies. ***Deceitful are the kisses of an enemy but faithful are the wounds of a friend. Pr 27:6 Love it when guilty convicted--hate it when guilty get away w/ crimes (politicians).***

Love rejoices when the truth comes out but mourns when hidden or ignored.

*Bears all things*—bears up under the accusations, mistreatment offenses of others. To cover & conceal faults. ***Keeps out resentment as ship water-proof rain. 1 Pet 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.***

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Won't expose others for the sake of ridicule. Won't to tell the mistakes, faults, weaknesses of others. Sets out to mend the tear, repair the breach rather than draw attention to it. **Love covers a multitude of sins.** Caught adultery

**Believes all things**—Not gullible but faith God is in control. *Jn 20:29 Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'* Complete trust. Believes the best in people & situations. *Grk saying 'he who mistrusts most should be trusted least.'* Easily burned because so trusting. We pigeonhole people w/ our opinions of them. If it's negative, it's hard for them to live up to anything different because they have become what we assumed them to be. **Guy ask forgiveness of me.** It doesn't mean we are gullible but not judgmental.

**Hopes all things**—Sees bright side of things, doesn't despair but perseveres. No one is hopeless & there are no hopeless situations-there is only people who have lost hope. **Martin Luther 'Everything that is done in the world is done by hope'.**

American Heart Association reported a study in the Public Health Institute in Berkeley California, that people who experience high levels of despair have 20% greater rate of atherosclerosis-narrowing of the arteries than do optimistic people. This is the same risk factor seen in a pack a day smokers and non-smokers' Conclusion: despair is as bad for you as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. Hope is healthy it's a by-product of love.

**Rom 8:24-25 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.**

**Endures all things**—'People fail much more often from lack of endurance than from lack of talent' *Hupomenei*—to bear up under all mistreatment whether friend or woe w/o complaint. Trusting God's **providence** in it all. Helen Keller-sightless & voiceless 'We can do anything we want to do if we stick to in long enough'

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Whatever man might mean for evil God will turn for good. *Endures*-adverse treatment by others-God sees & turns into advantage for us.

***1 Pet 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.***

*Love never fails*--Classic Grk *actor booed off stage love still holds it's place*

Abraham Lincoln was treated w/ contempt by Edwin Stanton who called him 'a low cunning clown' & nicknamed him 'the original gorilla' and said of an African hunter 'why wander about in Africa trying to capture a gorilla when he could have one so easily at Springfield Illinois'. During his presidency Lincoln made Stanton his war minister because he was the best man for the job & treated Stanton w/ respect and dignity... When an assassin's bullet ended Lincoln's life in Ford's theater, his body was taken to a little room & laid out. Stanton stood, tears streaming down his face, peering at the lifeless body of his rival & said '*Here lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen.*' Love won out in the end.

Greatest of all is love---Put Jesus name in---Put your name in